MERCY ITS PLACE IN THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT

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MERCY

ITS PLACE IN

THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

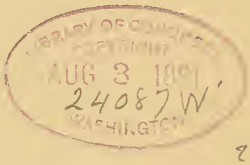
BY

JOHN M. ARMOUR,

AUTHOR OF "ATONEMENT AND LAW," "THE DIVINE METHOD OF LIFE," ETC.

"Be ye merciful as your Father is merciful."

"But mercy, . . .
"It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
"It is an attribute of God himself;
"And earthly power doth then show likest God's
"When mercy seasons justice . . ."



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PREFACE.

As the sun in the heavens, even so the Supreme Example, mercy in Christ, shines in glory far above the Works and Ways of God; and even above the Word of Divine Revelation. This Example is higher, brighter and more glorious than the Law of God revealed in any other way in which the law can be revealed. It is itself law, the very highest form of law; and withal, admirably suited to man. For the Son of God in our nature going before us in the "fulfilment of all righteousness," carrying obedience to its very limit, becoming "obedient unto death," gives us a most affecting, a most perfect — a Divine Example of the *way in which man may imitate God.*

Studying the Supreme Example of Mercy, we soon discover that it teaches us not only that God is *Merciful to Mankind*, but that He is *Merciful*

in Himself; and that this, *His Real Character*, is signified in *all* that he doeth; and that *His Government* is throughout *merciful* as well as righteous.

When we proceed to look closely into the Work of Christ, to consider just what it was that He did for us, we soon discover that His mercy to us consisted in the *Satisfaction of Law*, first, *for us*, by His Great Atonement; and then, by His Grace *in us*, bringing us into conformity to the Law of God. And from the study of the one Supreme Example of Mercy, we are led to see that *all mercy*, by whomsoever shown, must be in reality the "Imitation of Christ."

Carefully considering *how*, in the nature of the case, mercy, which in its entireness consists in satisfying law, can be dispensed unto moral beings, violators of law, having free will, and being responsible, it soon comes clearly into view that this *can be*, in divine mercy shown to man, or mercy by man to his fellow-man, *never*, either (a) *against* or (b) *without the will* or (c) without *the act* of those to whom the mercy is shown.

Confessedly in none of "His Goings" are the "clouds" and the "darkness" so impenetrable as in the matter of His Sovereignty in dealing

with mankind under the present Dispensation of Mercy. What takes place between God Most High and man the sinner, when a soul is saved or lost; saved by faith and penitence, or lost by unbelief and impenitence; what takes place in the very centre of that Cyclonic Storm-cloud which hurls to perdition or lifts to glory; perhaps not one of the angels in heaven may fully understand. Before the great mystery man may well stand with awe and deep humility. "*He will have mercy on whom we will have mercy.*" "It is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, *but of God that showeth mercy.*" But while the Clouds and Darkness *are* round about Him, we *can know* assuredly that His dealings with each individual of our race, whatever be the result of these dealings, will reveal Him to be Merciful as well as Righteous; we *can know* assuredly that He, operating in the awful, impenetrable darkness, is the same God whose infinite goodness is proclaimed in His word, displayed in His works, and witnessed by all in the whole course of His providence.

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MERCY

IN THE

DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

THE SUPREME EXAMPLE.

THE supreme example of goodness in the form of mercy as shown us in Christ, is an example and instance of goodness of which every other is a type and pattern. The greatest instance of goodness hath in it no element that is wholly wanting in the least instance. A drop of water from the sea lacks no one element that is to be found in the vast waters of the globe. A ray of light, the very slenderest, lacks no one element or property of that flood of light which fills interstellar space.

1. Goodness is one and the same *in all beings*, from the least to the greatest.

2. It is characteristic of all goodness that it terminates not on self, but *on other* beings.

3. The character and conduct of the "*other beings*" determines the form of the goodness.

4. Violators of law are the ones, the only ones toward whom goodness *can* take the form of *mercy true and proper*.

5. Mercy consists in delivering from condemnation, and at the same time restoring to a state of righteousness or of perfect conformity to law.

6. Perfect mercy, the mercy needed, God alone can give; for he only — and, so far as we can judge, he only by the incarnation — could provide for the satisfaction of law and for the restoration of the fallen. This is alpha and omega, beginning and end of God's mercy to man. To this nothing could be imagined to be added.

7. In the very nature of the case mercy consists in the satisfaction of law; for, when any being is able to render full and perfect satisfaction to that whole law under which he is, all conceivable good is assured to him by the very nature of law, and by the very character of God, and this *as his right and due*.

8. That the mercy *we* may show to our fellowmen cannot be really like that which God showeth to us, must not be assumed. For any instance of

the many ten thousands of merciful or charitable deeds which men are wont to perform, carefully studied, thoroughly analyzed, will yield, though in faint, infinitesimal proportion, the elements common to all mercy.

Thy neighbor lacketh food for his household, fuel and clothing to defend from the fierce wintry blast; assuredly because somewhere in the past law has been violated. What is furnished, then, is with the view of relieving him from a portion of that aggregate of evil which threatens him, or is coming on him, by reason of the onward movement of law, or because there is law in the universe, and law that cannot be mocked. Now, pray, go on in *that very direction* in which thou hast taken *one step*. Do for thy suffering neighbor in *all things* and *for all* time what thou hast done in *one small matter* and for a *very short time*. Come between him and all the consequences of violated law, furnish him all that he needs, all strength and grace, so that in nothing shall he come short of conformity to law — thou art then his saviour. Thou shalt then have shown him all the mercy it is possible he could receive. His cup then runneth over.

Consider that this thy act of mercy could not but

cost thee the surrender of that which was *thine*. Thou didst necessarily *suffer* the loss of that which was thine, and which was precious; for, if it were not thine, or were not precious, there had been no mercy in the transaction. "Little or no suffering," it may be said, because thou didst give of thine abundance. If little suffering, then little mercy; if no suffering, then no mercy. Great mercy, utmost mercy — utmost possible to thee, if not utmost possible to be shown unto him — it could have been only if the surrender of thine own had been complete. Great or perfect mercy it could have been only provided thou hadst been rich — rich, not in goods and gold, but rich in all heroic and glorious virtues and powers, aye, rich in life; and hadst thou given all, even life itself; that is, hadst thou had a life with "power to lay it down and take it again,"[1] and hadst thou freely laid it down and taken it again for him, that he might not perish.

That this view can be fully sustained, that it can be demonstrated clearly to the satisfaction of any candid reasoner, so that it shall be to him no less clear than the multiplication table itself, I do not hesitate to affirm. The mighty significance of this

[1] John x.: 18.

no one can fail to see. Its bearing upon the great questions so long in debate, but which seem in these later days to come with special prominence before the whole world, is most manifest. For if all mercy be, and can be clearly shown to be, by satisfaction of law, no vestige of standing-ground is left for any but the purely evangelical or orthodox view of Christ's great redemptive work. The new theology, then, is in the face of the whole teaching of human history, as well as in the face of the whole volume of revelation as it has been understood in all the ages. And it is surely worthy of note, it surely ought to "give pause" to the advanced, and advancing, theologian to consider that sceptics understand the Bible to teach the system of doctrine known as evangelical or orthodox — the substitutionary sufferings of Christ — and not any one of the modifications or diluted theories of the atonement.

Sheer above all other considerations rises the joy and gladness of the clear discovery that goodness is one; and that God calleth us to be, now and here, imitators of him; imitators of him in his supreme self-manifestation, in his grace to us. As interpreted by the angels, the "multitude of the

heavenly host"[1] Christ's redemptive work, the supreme instance and example of goodness, teaches us, and doubtless all moral beings, a profound lesson regarding the very nature of virtue or goodness — its relation to all being, created or Uncreated.

Whatsoever is good, every instance and example of what is right, of what ought to be done, even the very least, hath for its end and aim even that same which was the end and aim of God's one supreme example, the redemptive work of Christ; that is, "*glory to God and good-will*"[2] to creatures. The vision of this uplifts, and fills with rapturous joy. Not on self terminates any act of virtue; not on few; not on many; not on creatures. No; it relateth to all being. And first of all to Him who is more and nearer and worthier, infinitely, than are any or all created beings. And goodness which acts God-ward takes the form of praise, service, worship, not because goodness acting God-ward is in itself different from goodness acting man-ward, or in any other direction, or toward anything that lives, any being that can be blest or made to enjoy, or can be an object of goodness, — but because of the nature and charac-

[1] Luke II. : 13. [2] Luke II. : 14.

ter of Him toward whom it goeth forth. Love to God is not separable in kind from love to man, as we are explicitly taught. Goodness — itself ever strictly, purely one and the same — takes form always according to the object unto which it addresses itself. Carry this up to the supreme question of the goodness of God in dealing with his creatures. Why must we hesitate? If our goodness necessarily, of itself, instantly taketh form which is determined solely by the object toward which it is addressed, why should we at all hesitate to regard this as *the law of the going forth of all goodness?* Why should we be at all perplexed at the exemplification of this in the outgoing and results of even infinite goodness in dealing with moral beings?

And may not we in this way get some gleam of light as we contemplate the diversity of the divine dealings with moral beings? May we not say that what the greatest culprits experience is what proceeds from goodness — and this not because goodness is hindered from its full manifestation of itself by reason of justice — and is terrible only because of the character and estate of those toward whom goodness is addressed?

"Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment the habitation of his throne."[1] "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."[2] Infinite goodness, not discriminative? but bestowed irrespective of character or conduct? *i.e.* Promises and blessings to "him that cometh,"[3] and to him that cometh not? Mercy "compass round him that trusteth?"[4] — and him that trusteth not? It is unscriptural, irrational, impossible. Mercy for "the chief of sinners?" Yes; but only if the chief of sinners be truly penitent. "His penitence of grace?" Yes; yet *he*, the chief of sinners, must *be*, in point of fact, *himself* penitent; and his being so,— even though it be of grace,— is praiseworthy, is rewardable, is rewarded. He, though operated on, influenced to the utmost by grace, is yet pleasing to God, and is rewarded; "*returns to his house justified.*"[5] Grace is not a device for dispensing with virtue in creatures. Grace must not be thought to render virtue impossible. Grace awakens, incites to activity, encourages from first to last — at first quite as well as afterwards; at first quite as plainly as at

[1] Ps. xcvii.: 2. [3] John vi.: 37. [5] Luke xviii.: 14.
[2] I. John i.: 5. [4] Ps. xxxii.: 10.

last — real and proper acts of virtue, praiseworthy and rewardable.

Not the dealings of Supreme Goodness, then, with creatures capable of sin and of virtue, but the existence of beings thus endowed and responsible is the real enigma, the hard problem. Creatures of this character existing, could not be wisely or rightly dealt with otherwise. Divine goodness could take no other form when dealing with beings thus constituted and thus acting. It is not justice, but God, infinite in all perfections, who condemns the wicked, the impenitent. There is, then, I submit, no question but this: How could it be that Infinite Goodness should call into being the universe which is? The other questions resolve themselves into this one; and face to face with this one we must all stand, — unless we be content to think fitfully and fragmentarily and flippantly all our lives. And let no one hastily affirm that there is no gain in the resolution of all to this one final mystery. Is it no gain to see clearly that the universe, being constituted as it is, could be governed no otherwise than it is, even by any possible or imaginable goodness in the Supreme Ruler? Besides, what but mystery could be expected when

we come to the question, "What sort of universe were the best?" "*With whom took he counsel or who instructed him?*"[1] "*Where wast thou when I laid the foundations?*"[2]

The one mystery, the weightiest burden, which rests upon the spirit of man, confronted as he is with the vast aggregate of suffering in this life — foreshadowing as it does the possible extent and duration of suffering hereafter — is the thought that in dealing with the sufferers divine goodness does not *seem* to have shone forth in all its fulness. For, without some rational view — something approaching an explanation — it is well-nigh impossible to accept at their full value, and in their plain import, the words of Scripture: "*The Lord is good to all: his tender mercies are over all his works.*"[3]

But if, in the nature of the case, goodness, whether finite or infinite, must always take form according to the character and conduct of the object of goodness — whatever perplexity may arise from the existence, the extent or the duration of suffering — no shadow, no film of cloud remains to obscure the glory and brightness of

[1] Is. XL.: 14. [2] Job XXXVIII.: 4. [3] Ps. CXLV.: 9.

Divine Goodness. It is no small gain to see that it *is* Infinite Goodness that is dealing with all; and that the difference of those dealings is owing to the character and conduct of those dealt with.

God is in this, as in all his ways, sovereign. "He giveth not account of any of his matters."[1] He "hath mercy on whom he will have mercy."[2] Yet man is ever held answerable — and at the peril of all hope — for his response to whatsoever God *in his sovereignty* doeth for or unto him. "Salvation is of the Lord."[3] Yet never except by concurrent praiseworthy choice and act on the part of him who is saved. And this praiseworthy choice and act must not be imagined to be (a) either *not of* him who is saved (b) or *after*, but *when* grace is put forth. For no one is made willing who does not himself will. No one is made willing who does not will *synchronously* with that agency which maketh him willing. The glory of that efficacious grace which maketh any one willing, is that he upon whom such grace operates himself *doth* both "*will*" and "*do*."[4] Divine sovereignty in this whole matter is so clearly

[1] Job xxxiii. : 13.
[2] Rom. ix. : 18.
[3] Jonah ii. : 9.
[4] Phil. ii. : 13.

taught, doctrinally and historically, in scripture, so abundantly confirmed and illustrated in the whole history of redemption, and withal, so in accordance with God's way in all his works, in the whole course of his providence, that it never should be for a moment questioned or lost sight of. And all attempts to frame our theology so as to relieve our minds from the awe-inspiring, face-to-face view of divine sovereignty, are alike presumptuous, unscriptural, and vain.

But while setting before us divine sovereignty, does not the Bible from beginning to end, and with equal emphasis, teach and press upon all, man's responsibility, ever setting before him "the way of life and the way of death";[1] and man's responsibility in the very matter of *that obedience* to the divine commandment, which is essential to salvation? "This is his commandment that ye believe."[2] And by what subtle process of reasoning can praiseworthiness and rewardableness be wholly taken from the first act of obedience, an act of obedience, too, which, in the nature of the case, is determinative of destiny? Language could not more clearly assert the blameworthiness of the

[1] Jer. xxi. : 8. [2] I. John iii. : 23.

rejecters of the mercy of God as it is offered to man, the blameworthiness of those "who obey not the gospel."[1] Nor could there be more hearty commendation of those who obey, and accept divine grace.

Let it be clearly seen that every moral being in the universe is always clothed with real and unabated responsibility, — a responsibility all his own, shared by no being created or Uncreated — and that Infinite Goodness ever deals with each according to his free choice and act in the exercise of this responsibility — and let it not be overlooked that in grace this responsibility is not abridged or abated but increased and intensified — then man's present duty is pressed home upon him with utmost solemnity; and God's dealing with man, so far as this matter is concerned, is not at all mysterious or appalling.

The greatness of God and the littleness of man, it is well to keep ever in view. No one can be too much impressed with the infinite disparity. But if any one allow himself to fall from the clear recognition of man's freedom of will, man's being a moral person, by reason of his distance from the

[1] II. Thess. 1. : 8.

Supreme, the Infinite, he is simply befogged. A moral person of the feeblest powers is a moral person as truly as one of the greatest. The smallness of a globe does not rob it of its character as a globe. The smallest globe lacks no property that pertains to the largest.

No error has been more prevalent or more fatal than the virtual denial of man's responsibility. The prevailing view of the average worldling is, that God our Creator, is in reality responsible for our well-being. The multitudes who neglect "the Great Salvation"[1] it will ever be found have this for their abiding belief: "God made us and placed us in this world surrounded as we are with temptations; and he will see to it that all shall be well with us in the end." And even the vast majority of those who give some attention to religion, have no proper sense of man's being in reality answerable to God, who sets before every one "life and good, and death and evil."[2] The full and clear view of this is seen only in the case of those who experience the great awakening. Besides this, multitudes holding to the scriptural doctrine of divine decrees and election, allow these to come

[1] Heb. II. : 3. [2] Deut. xxx. : 15.

between man and God, so that they never get a true view of man's accountability; failing to see that there is no doctrine of the Bible which affords to man the slightest protection from the rays of the Sun of God's Holy Law, a Sun never for a moment eclipsed. No film of cloud intercepts his rays. This sky is always clear. This was so in man's estate of innocence. This is true of man under the whole dispensation of grace. This is not only true of all to whom the gospel comes; it is true of the heathen who have not the gospel, for even they are "without excuse."[1]

If we ask why there is this failure on the part of so many, to realize the solemn truth regarding man's responsibility, the answer is at hand — Man simply abuses the divine mercy, despises "the riches of his goodness,"[2] not considering that all God has done in making man what he is, and placing him where he is, so far from detracting from, mightly increases his responsibility. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"[3] That God should in reality hold man answerable, is in the estimation of many, so mysterious, so wonderful as

[1] Rom. I. : 20. [2] Rom. II. : 4. [3] Is. v. : 4.

to be incredible. But the wonder, the mystery, quite disappears whensoever one gets from under the clouds and mists which prevail — clouds and mists which too often gather and linger about some of the grandest and highest mountains in the whole range of revealed truth.

Perhaps the one view most difficult to gain a clear sight of, is the *separateness* and *loneliness* of every moral being, from the least to the greatest. Dim consciousness of this comes at times even to a little child. But its profound significance few fairly behold. "I, now and forever separate from all else that is; I, a person — with all reverence, yet with all confidence — quite as truly as God himself — I, made in his image and after his likeness, clean and clear now and forever separated from, and not only uninvaded but uninvadable by the highest created beings — I, having to do with, and answerable to the King of the Universe, and only to any other because first unto him." And whoso thus "comes to himself" can hardly fail to have some promptings to "arise and go to his father." For he who learns to say "I," cannot stop till he has said "thou." And what "thou" can fill the place, can come into the holy of holies,

the heart of hearts, can be to me all that I need, all that I crave? One by one, or in troops let them pass; the great and the small; I who am so little, *need* more, *seek* more than they can *give*, more than they *are*. The "Thou" every soul searcheth for, "feeleth after,"[1] is none other than the Infinite One. But One — "Whom have I in heaven but Thee"[2] — Each thinking being, himself one, for one Friend he pineth and searcheth ever, whether wisely and successfully or foolishly and in vain. In this search whatsoever he beholdeth, ever speaketh of the way: for of the One Infinite Maker and Ruler, all that is made and that is ruled is witness.

For himself the Creator made man. In his own image and after his own likeness — *and for himself* — the Creator made man. Therefore, with man -- near to him — in him — in his heart, no other can be. Alone, — and burdened more and more with the sense of his loneliness — must he be till he return to him from whom he has wandered. The one *Way of Return* to God, it is the burden of Holy Scripture to reveal. It is but the acceptance of divine goodness in the form of mercy as offered in the gospel.

[1] Acts xvii. : 27. [2] Ps. lxxiii. : 25.

PART I.

MERCY

IN

CHARACTER AND GOVERNMENT.

CHAPTER I.

MERCIFUL TO MANKIND.

All who believe in the existence of One Supreme Being, the Creator and Ruler of all, believe him to be a Being infinite in all perfections, infinite in goodness: and though refusing to accept any writing as a revelation, they cannot but know that the Supreme Being who rules this world, in ten thousand ways signifies his goodness in the form of free unmerited favors and blessings; cannot but know that his goodness does not consist in his being merely just; for they not only see that man is not punished as he deserves, but is compassed round with innumerable and priceless blessings. All men, therefore, whether they accept or reject the Bible, must agree in ascribing mercifulness to the Being who rules this world.

But all who accept Divine Revelation hold that the great mercy shown to mankind in the mission

and work of Christ, is mercy which proceeds from the infinite goodness of God. It ought then to be clearly seen that there is this common ground on which all men — except atheists — can meet; viz.: that mercifulness is characteristic of the Divine Being — certainly in his dealings with our race.

To the redeemed of mankind he shows himself merciful, most merciful: but to all mankind, to the race as such, in his dealings with them from first to last he shows himself not merely as a God of justice but as a God of mercy. This is abundantly declared throughout the word of Revelation. "The Lord is good to all: his mercy is over all his works."[1] "Whoso is wise and will observe these things" — the whole course of providence as it is described in the Psalm — "even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord."[2] It must never be forgotten that with the race of mankind, with each individual of the race God deals consistently with his proclaimed character; "the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious."[3]

Not only unto the redeemed but unto all to whom the offer of the gospel is made he shows himself most merciful. For no one of these shall be con-

[1] Ps. cxlv.: 9. [2] Ps. cvii.: 43. [3] Ex. xxxiv.: 6.

demned and banished from the presence of the Lord, merely on the ground that he "sinned in Adam and fell with him in his first transgression;" or merely on the ground of his being one of the lapsed race of mankind; nor will he be condemned for any one or for all his (other) actual transgressions: but for his refusal to accept the offered mercy. "This is *the* condemnation that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light."[1] To think otherwise is to misinterpret the offer of the gospel; for if this offer be made in good faith it is one in which is expressed and set forth the infinite mercifulness of God.

All those who reject the gospel offer, then, are under condemnation not merely because they sinned against a righteous God—since all such sins, original or actual, might have been forgiven—but because they sinned against a most merciful God offering to them salvation and entreating them to accept pardon, peace and life eternal. So even the sufferings of the impenitent shall be a monument not only to the justice, but to the mercifulness of God; since the formal, exact, determinative indictment on which their condemnation hinged was

[1] John III.: 19.

their rejection of divine mercy offered to them — a monument, the complement of that other radiant and glorious, in the world of light. Dark and awful as may be the shadows and clouds which gather around it, these can never hide from the intelligent universe its true significance; for the fact that it commemorates the rejection of mercy, detracts nothing from its significance as commemorative of the existence, the extent, the infinitude of that mercy which was rejected. Indeed the difference between that monument which shines in heavenly glory and around which gather the blood-washed throng of the redeemed who "sing of the mercies of the Lord forever;"[1] and that other monument surrouded by the clouds of vengeance under which wail all the kindreds of the earth who "have pierced him,"[2] who have rejected his mercy, is simply this: the one commemorates mercy accepted, the other mercy rejected. It would be a gross misconception to make the rejection of offered mercy detract anything from the merciful character of him who offers it. This rejection casts not a film of a shadow upon that glorious attribute, the mercy of God. Indeed,

[1] Ps. LXXXIX.: 1. [2] Rev. 1.: 7.

what could bring out more wonderfully the riches and fulness of that mercy than the patience and long-suffering of him who "waits to be gracious,"[1] who "stands at the door and knocks,"[2] who pleads with sinners, saying, "Why will ye die?"[3] "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth."[4] "How often would I have gathered thy children together."[5]

To judge otherwise — to regard the rejection of God's mercy as something that obscures the mercifulness of him who makes the offer — we must either fail to regard the offer as genuine and in good faith, or hold that the responsibility for the result is upon him who makes the offer, and not upon him to whom it is made.

I am aware that we are thus brought to a profound question: The question of the relation of the will of man to the power and grace of God. But let it be remembered that the worst of all attempts at solution, is that one which makes the great offer of the gospel a mere feint, and at the same time reduces to zero both will and responsibility in the creature. But just this easy solution

[1] Is. xxx.: 18. [3] Jer. xxvii.: 13. [5] Matt. xxiii.: 37.
[2] Rev. iii.: 20. [4] Ezek. xviii.: 32.

many good men adopt, seemingly unconscious of the consequences to which it inevitably leads.

How is the Mercifulness of God's Character shown in the case of all those who have never heard the Gospel?

All men live "under a dispensation of mercy." The race of mankind was spared because God was merciful, most merciful. Indeed the generation of mankind now living on earth owe their very existence to the intervention of Christ; for had not God so loved the world that he gave his Son,[1] i.e., had there been no delay in the execution of the sentence, whatever might have been, surely the prosperity of Adam would not have been in the enjoyment of "life and breath and all things,"[2] as they now are. The race was spared because of God's mercy in Christ.

All men in addition to experiencing the sparing mercy of God in that there is, because of the great atonement, delay in the execution of deserved penalty, experience also day by day and throughout their whole lives the mercy of God in the countless and priceless gifts and blessings of his providence.

[1] John III. : 16. [2] Acts XVII. : 25.

Indeed, all that he does unto them he does consistently with his character as most merciful. So that without a word of divine revelation, all may know, cannot but know, that the Supreme Being who deals with them is longsuffering, is good and gracious, does not *now* strictly and rigidly inflict deserved penalty, but "*waits to be gracious.*"[1]

If we ask the question, on what grounds shall they be judged who have never heard the gospel, it is every way more reasonable to answer: "They shall be judged for the manner in which they respond to that merciful approach which God makes to them in his providence, — in all his dealings with them,— even as all gospel hearers shall be judged for the manner in which they respond to that merciful approach which God makes to them through the gospel," than to answer: "*They* shall be dealt with on the grounds of bare and mere justice." It must be considered that though the mercy of God shines forth through the proclaimed gospel, it also shines forth in the whole course of his dealings with mankind. In fact the Scripture itself, when it declares to us the mercifulness of God, ever points us to the proof of this as seen in

[1] Is. xxx.: 18.

his providence. It is, then, to be assumed that all men will be dealt with on the ground of that special manifestation of mercy — be it what it may — which they have actually enjoyed. Accepting this view, have we not a simple, clear, consistent principle on which all mankind are dealt with, a principle which sets forth the excellence of the divine character as most merciful as well as most righteous?

We may thus reverently commit this whole matter to him whom we know to be most merciful, assured that in dealing with those who have the *least light* he will deal on the same principle as with those who have the *most light*. If this should lead us to the entertaining of the question, "How small a measure of light regarding the merciful character of God may possibly be so responded unto as to admit to a share in that mercy?" or to the question, "What is the true significance of that assurance which we have in the inspired word, 'Beaten with few stripes'"; [1] let no devout soul be disturbed. Indeed those who have the clearest and largest view of the mercifulness of God to themselves, can with utmost confidence rest

[1] Lu. xii. : 48.

in the assurance that he, in dealing with others of their race, deals as a most merciful God; and that the sum total of his dealings with others, whatever be the character and conduct of those dealt with, and whatever be the result, whatever be their destiny, will redound to the honor and praise of God not merely as a God of justice but as a God of mercy.

Sovereignty shown in dealing with Mankind, as everywhere else in the Works and Ways of God.

There is indeed in the Lord's dealings with the individuals of our race the utmost variety. As to their endowments, their environment and their destiny, so far from being alike, there seems to be the utmost disparity. That some should be, as we esteem it, in the enjoyment of the richest and highest privileges, while others are left in destitution and extreme privation, is a matter we cannot contemplate without wonder and awe. Why this should be, what reasons justify this, we cannot hope to ascertain. But we *can* see that this *is* in accordance with God's method in all his works and ways. Everywhere we learn that the utmost variety is the rule. Indeed this is the clearly

marked distinction between the works of God and the works of man. In the works of God a common type with endless variations, by which individuality is ensured, is the rule. This is true not only of the individuals of the race of mankind, whether regarded physically, intellectually or morally; it is even true of the individual trees of the forest; true of the individual leaves of the forest. It is not for us to say what transcendent and glorious results are secured by the universality of this marvelous law — uniformity of type with individual variations. If rigid adherence to this law, which excites in us so much wonder, interest and delight, necessitate certain astounding departures from what *we* would have judged to be highest and best, it is not for us to complain; since we know not the ends which are thus attained and which could not otherwise be reached.

If we will but carefully consider that in dealing with each individual — the least favored as well as the most highly favored — all the perfections of the Divine Being are fully exercised, all the circumstances of each individual fully taken into account, we shall have no difficulty in regard to the divine dealings with one or with the other.

The Esquimaux in his snow-hut, destitute of all that the civilized and enlightened man holds dear, is under the care of Him whose tender mercies are over all; of Him who is no respecter of persons; of Him who is able to deal with each in a way consistent with his own real and whole character as merciful and gracious.

This law of endless variety is one which in many ways provides for the exercise of the best powers of the individual, and the maintaining of relations of mutual helpfulness. "Hath not the potter power over the clay?"[1] is a doctrine which none but devout and reverent souls can accept. Man imagines himself some way exalted above, or exempt from, those laws which he cannot but see *do* prevail in all departments of the universe beneath him. To be "the clay" in the hand of "the potter," to be wholly at the disposal of the Supreme Being, to be "for his glory," and to be dealt with in all things according to his predetermined will—"the counsel of his will"[2]—this, the carnal mind cannot abide; but this, devout and trustful ones accept with rapture as the best that could be. To this no man cometh save by the

[1] Rom. IX.: 21. [2] Eph. I.: 11.

grace of God. It is a faith which renders to God the highest tribute possible. It is the supreme manifestation of man's confidence in the wisdom, power and goodness of God. But in vain will any one hope to gain that solution of this question which will give peace and rest to the troubled soul, otherwise than by the personal knowledge and experience of the mercifulness of God to himself. Then only is he prepared to trust, to *rest in* the assurance that the same being who is merciful to him, will vindicate to all the universe his own real character, even his infinite goodness in his dealings with the race, and with each individual of the race, and this, whatsoever the result may be. Without at all assuming to enter the arcana, the holy of holies, which God claims for himself, without endeavoring in any way to get even a glimpse of what is done in the inner chambers of the heart either of the saved or of the lost — either of Judas or of John — in that supreme crisis in which destiny is determined — and determined by a single act of choice — we may, nay, we must accept it — unless we set ourselves against the heavens — that whatsoever God doeth in the one case or in the other, leaves those with whom he deals free and

also responsible; accept it also, that God's real and whole character, his character as a God of mercy as well as of justice, will be fully, gloriously vindicated; and this, wholly irrespective of the issue, the result, the direful doom, or glorious destiny of any of those with whom he deals.

CHAPTER II.

MERCIFUL IN HIMSELF.

If God is merciful to the redeemed of mankind, if he is merciful in his dealings with the race of mankind,— if the mercifulness of his character shall shine forth gloriously to all eternity in the blessedness of the saved; and if even the condemnation of the unsaved, since it is specifically and formally on the ground of the rejection of offered mercy, shall also be an enduring monument to the mercifulness of his character — let it be considered that this is true because he is *merciful in himself.*

This he explicitly and solemnly proclaims in his word: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious."[1] "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these

[1] Ex. xxxiv.: 6.

things I delight, saith the Lord."[1] In these and like portions of Scripture, it is the mercifulness of God *in himself*, and not merely his mercifulness to us, that is asserted and proclaimed. Indeed it is by the acceptance of the faith that God is in himself a merciful Being — even as this his real character is revealed to us in his providence as well as proclaimed in his word — that we rise to the faith, the expectation, the joyous assurance, that he will be merciful to us. For when Christ would inspire confidence in the care, love, and tender mercy of God, he ever appealed to the abounding proofs of his kindness and goodness, as these proofs are set before all, in the order of nature and in the course of providence, not only in dealing with mankind, but in providing for the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air.

As we have seen, the dealings of God with the race of mankind have been all under a dispensation of mercy. These dealings as they are and shall be contemplated in the eternal ages, shall testify not simply to the fact that God was merciful to the race of mankind, but that he is in himself, essentially, a merciful, a most merciful as well as

[1] Jer. IX.: 24.

a most righteous Being. And let it not be thought that God's being most righteous must, in the nature of the case, detract from the mercifulness of his character, or limit or restrict the mercifulness of his dealings with moral beings. For it is not merely true that no being can be merciful who is not also just; but it is true that no being can show mercy except at the same time and *in the same act* he also show himself righteous. Favor shown to the needy and the suffering contrary to righteousness, or in disregard of righteousness, is not mercy, is not praiseworthy, is not required, but forbidden by the law of God.

The doctrine of divine mercy is in all the Scripture marvelously safeguarded by the most distinct and startling declarations of the Lord's righteousness. "The Lord merciful and gracious"—is the Lord "who *will by no means clear the guilty*." The Christ who from Mount Olivet "weeps over the city," saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together," —is the Christ who exclaims, "*Behold your house is left unto you desolate*."

Mercy thus set forth is heaven high above that which man fondly imagines to be the mercy he

needs. Righteousness instead of receding, weakening or wavering, most gloriously and fully asserts itself in the transaction by which mercy is afforded to man. God's mercy is irradiated, is all aglow with his righteousness. This it is which makes it precious. This it is which makes it in truth mercy at all. The element, righteousness, taken from mercy, it is no more mercy; its glory is departed. Language could not more strongly set forth this. Christ is called "The Lord our righteousness."[1] Grace reigns "through righteousness."[2] "For therein"—that is in the "gospel"—"is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."[3] "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." "To declare at this time his righteousness." Whoso, then, dreams of mercy, which simply "steals a march" upon righteousness, does but dream a vain dream from which there must come, sometime, a great awakening. Grace otherwise than "through righteousness" is not grace at all. We shall have day without the sun, sooner than salvation without righteousness.

The Lord, as he is revealed to us in his word

[1] Jer. xxiii. : 6. [2] Rom. v. : 21. [3] Rom. i. : 17.

and in his work — and as in both of these he "declares his righteousness"— is revealed to us as merciful in himself.

But following a different line of thought we shall be led to this same conclusion. Goodness in its very nature, in its highest manifestation, culminates in mercifulness. It could culminate in nothing else. The foundation of a pyramid determines the height to which it must rise. Goodness, perfection, in a moral being great or small, finite or infinite, is a pyramid the predetermined apex of which can be nothing less or lower than mercy. All the rays of sunlight combined amount to pure white light. All the elements of a perfect character combined and in utmost activity, result in the white light of pure mercy. For the same reason that we call no one of our fellowmen good who is simply just, who in dealing with his fellowmen stops short at the line of even and exact justice; are we forbidden to assume that there can be any being really good who in dealing with other beings, with any other being, stops short at the line of bare and mere justice.* How then dare

* "What lack I yet?" is a question which, though it were asked by one who had in *reality* never deviated from the line of

we assume that the one Being who alone is good, who is infinitely good, and who requires mercifulness of all, does in any case deal with other beings on the ground of bare and mere and exact justice; so that they might truly say in eternity, "We know nothing of any goodness of God save that he is a God of justice; toward us no higher phase of his character has ever been turned?" (Unquestionably no one of our race shall be able to say this.) To assume this is to make a standard of goodness that is purely imaginary; one that the moral sense wherewith man is endowed by his Creator cannot rest in, or regard as the supreme and universal standard; a standard lower than that one which God ever holds up before man in his word and by his example: "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."[1] "Be ye merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful."[2]

But why should we imagine that the Divine Being deals in strict and mere justice with any of his creatures? We have indeed been taught by certain theologians that God *is*, by the necessities

exact justice, should ever find its true answer in the words: "If thou wilt be perfect go and sell all,"— i.e.: Be thou merciful.

[1] Matt. v.: 48. [2] Lu. vi.: 36.

of his nature, always just in his dealings with all; and that he *may* be merciful — though his nature, his character, his attributes do not require him to go beyond the line of mere justice. This it is thought tends to magnify and exalt the mercy of God as shown to us. But his mercy towards us proceeds from his nature and his character, as a perfect being; and we must not gratuitously assume that in dealing with any other moral beings he has shown himself only as a God of justice.

Why should it be thought that all the divine perfections and pre-eminently the divine goodness may not shine forth clearly in dealing with all moral beings? We make no such distinction in our estimate of the character of any finite moral being, as shown in his dealings with his fellow beings. Why should we make such distinction in our estimate of the character and dealings of the One Infinite Being who is the example and pattern of excellence for all other beings?

When carefully considered it will ever be found that the sole ground for this distinction — making one standard for all finite moral beings, and another, and I am constrained to add a lower

standard, for the Supreme Being — is the inconsiderate assumption that, since God is infinite in power and in all perfections, it is competent to him not only to show himself merciful to those needing mercy, but to ensure in every instance that those to whom he shows himself merciful shall actually come to share and enjoy his mercy. But for this unsupported assumption, no such distinction could be made in our estimate of moral beings, no such difference of standard of moral excellence could be endured.

We are then required to consider fully the great question: What, and how much may one moral being do in influencing and determining the will of other moral beings? Is it competent to one moral being by any exercise of his power to determine and decide the action of the will of other beings so that their decisions shall always and necessarily be wise and right; and this without invading or nullifying the freedom of will, or in any respect removing or lightening that real responsibility which in the nature of the case is linked thereto?

For if we hold that in determining the will of others, nothing more is required than plentitude of power, we are not only constrained to admit that

the sole reason mercy offered to man is in any case rejected is that this power is not put forth; but we are constrained also to hold that the sole reason any creature of God is not a full sharer in the divine goodness, is the mere will of the Supreme. Scripture very fully and plainly declares — and with equal emphasis — both the almightiness and sovereignty of God, and the real responsibility of creatures endowed with freedom of will.

Perhaps the most remarkable, the most prevalent "*non sequitur*" to be found in man's theology is, that goodness, if only it be the goodness of a being who is infinite, must embrace and encompass with blessings all beings, irrespective of their own character or conduct. This is the one source of that heresy with which the church has had to contend in all ages, and which in various forms and new phases comes up, to the dismay of the evangelical and orthodox throughout christendom. "God is merciful, God is infinite in all perfections: Why then may we not hope that all shall, sooner or later, share fully in his mercy?" But his infinite goodness even in the form of mercy furnishes no ground of hope to the *impenitent*,

even as his infinite justice no ground of fear to the penitent. We at once and clearly see that infinite justice discriminates; we clearly see that punishments are conditioned upon character and conduct. But let us not overlook the fact that blessings are also conditioned upon character and conduct.

In the case of moral beings on trial — as were our first parents, and as were the angels, and, we may safely infer, as were all moral beings at some time — it will perhaps be freely admitted that *their* experiencing the goodness, or *their* falling under the stroke of the justice, of their Creator, *did* in downright and plain truth depend upon their conduct. God's infinitude of goodness did not ensure their continuing in the enjoyment of bliss. God's infinite justice did not necessitate their experiencing punishment. *Their* exercise of their *own free will*, their *conduct* and *character* determined in this matter.

But in the case of the lapsed of our race it is thought that the matter is wholly changed. When God's goodness becomes mercy, it is thought that it is a flood which rises and swells, so that all regard to character and conduct or wisdom and rightness of choice, is quite covered, and should

never come into view. Because grace abounds to the "chief of sinners" it is thought that the divine goodness in the form of mercy cannot be, as in the case of the unfallen, in any sense discriminative. This is but a notable instance of the confounding of things which are separate, and which no more commingle than do fire and water. "Whosoever will" must not be emasculated by making it mean anything short of: whosoever by his own will maketh a praiseworthy and a rewardable choice. God has not changed. The relation — constituted by the very nature of God and the very nature of man — between God as a moral agent and man as a moral agent, is an unchangeable relation. Under *grace* and *here* in *this world*, even as *before grace* or in any other world, moral beings stand apart from each other and are dealt with as real and distinct personalities. Efficacious grace is efficacious only because he who experiences it, *acts*, and acts in a way which God *commands* and *commends* and REWARDS. Strange that there should be so much confusion when the gospel as it is set forth in the whole Scripture is all aglow with the white light of this very truth. Mercy unto all? No, to "him who cometh." "Mercy com-

pass round" — whom? Him that "trusteth in the Lord." "But why not also him that trusteth not? Is there not mercy enough for the one as well as for the other?" O fool and slow of heart, seest thou not that *trust in the Lord is itself an element in the mercy*, an essential element?

I do not hesitate to put on record in this place my most profound and most joyful faith that there is no created being now, there will be no created being in the eternity, excluded from the full participation of the infinite goodness of God, except by reason of the want of, the wilful and persistent refusal of, that which is itself essential to such enjoyment. Accept this view and then at once there comes before the mind the overwhelming, gladdening view of the infinitude of divine goodness — yes, divine mercy, vast as space itself; goodness which grasps and holds within itself whatsoever is created; and goodness shared fully by all except such as by deliberate, persistent, final choice and act, refuse and reject it; and what even these suffer, they suffer not only *because* of such rejection, but *in* and *by* such rejection.

1. The very goodness of God, the very infinitude of his goodness, — the mercifulness of his

character and of his government — makes it possible that there should be sinners such as there are.

2. The direst punishment they suffer, so far from being inconsistent with the goodness of God, consists in exclusion from such goodness.

3. This exclusion no one can seriously think to be the mere determination of the will of Him who alone is good: for this thought would itself be the denial of the infinitude of His goodness.

And let it not be supposed that since the result is not changed, there is no gain in taking this view; let it not be supposed that it is of no consequence what view we take of the mercifulness of the divine character in His dealings with the lost, since in point of fact they are lost, they fail to share the divine goodness.

For whether the result of His dealings with an individual or with a race be salvation or condemnation, in the one case as in the other the justice, the goodness, the infinite mercifulness of God may shine out clearly and fully to all intelligencies and to all eternity. Entertain this conception of the divine character and of the divine dealings with all moral beings, and from the most awful realms in the universe as well as from the brightest and

highest, will shine forth the evidence, not merely of the justice, the power and the glory, but the evidence of the goodness, the infinite mercifulness of the Supreme, Lawgiver, Judge, and King. Surely with unspeakable joy we may entertain this view. Surely it tends to throw light upon one of the darkest problems which confronts us; for then we are under no necessity of imagining that there are any beings who know nothing of God save as a God of strict, absolute, mere and bare justice. Taking this view we see a force, a significance, a beauty in the abounding declarations of Scripture respecting the goodness of God, which we could not otherwise see. Then we can really accept as true the words of Scripture: "The Lord *is* good to all; his mercy is over all his works."

Going back to the record of the fall of angels and of the race of mankind, how can we fail to learn a lesson regarding the relation which God sustains to the will of his creatures? If his infinite goodness, and his almightiness did not avail to ensure wise and right choice in the case of holy angels and sinless man, how can we now assume that the goodness and the almightiness of God must ensure that the lapsed of mankind shall

sooner or later make wise and right choice and be saved? There is no difficulty connected with the non-restoration of the fallen that is not really involved in the non-confirmation of the unfallen. The astounding fact of the fall of some of the angels and of the whole race of mankind — the only orders of beings of whom we have any intimation — should give pause to rash and confident men who imagine they are honoring God by ascribing to him a work, a prerogative — not to say a responsibility — which he has never claimed or exercised, — and one the exercise of which would, clearly, have prevented the fall of men and of angels; so that there had been no need for its exercise in the matter of mercy offered to the fallen. If it is competent to God, because of his infinite goodness, linked as it is with his infinite power, to ensure in every case, and without taking away either liberty of will or real responsibility, a right and wise choice in the case of *fallen* beings, why not *also* — why not much *more* — in the case of the *unfallen?* With God all things are possible. But our Lord addressed these words to men, not to parrots. With God the greatest of all impossibilities is that he should do that which

would nullify his own most wonderful work, that which would strike down from his lofty — though perilous — eminence, man, whom he made in his own image and whom he made lord of this lower world. Salvation of the efficacious grace of God. Salvation always the result of the believing of him who is saved. Both these truths are supported by innumerable texts of Scripture. These two truths must not be made to be antagonistic. Neither must be so received, held and interpreted as to exclude or nullify the other; not even when the intention is to give all glory to God; for God is honored by the reception of all revealed truth.

CHAPTER III.

THE REAL AND THE WHOLE CHARACTER.

But if God is merciful in his very nature, can we safely assume that this is shown only in dealing with the redeemed of mankind, or even with the entire race? The real character of a moral being should come into view in dealing with all other beings; especially if we take into the account those dealings in their completeness.

It may be said: "God's merciful character is brought clearly into view in his dealings with mankind, because they as fallen and perishing were fit objects of mercy; but in the case of the angels, there was no display of the divine mercy, since neither those who stood nor those who fell experienced mercy; the former not needing it, and the latter not having had any offer of mercy."

Before accepting the above statement as the whole truth in the case, we should give careful

attention to a question which takes precedence to this one: May not the real, that is, the merciful character of God be manifested in dealing with beings who continue in a state of integrity, and even in dealing with those who by one transgression fall irretrievably and are banished forever? Surely it is every way credible that a moral being whose attributes render him essentially and truly merciful, would act in his dealings with all other beings in a way which, severely analyzed, would give evidence of this his real character. The very elements of character clearly manifested in dealing with moral beings *not objects of mercy*, might be such as rightly interpreted would give assurance that mercy *would be shown* should there be scope and occasion for mercy. It is assumed that the mercifulness of God — that is, his real and whole character, the infinitude of his goodness — has no place or scope, and in point of fact is not exercised either in the case of those beings who kept their first estate or of those who fell irretrievably, as did some of the angels (of whom it is gratuitously assumed that they sinned not against infinite mercy). This is to assume that the real character may be inactive, unexercised, undisplayed,

dormant. A moral being who acts, acts always the being that he is. A true analysis and full estimate of the dealings of one moral being with any other, would result in a true discovery of his real and whole character, his very highest perfection. It is very true that such analysis is *to us* manifestly impossible. We look only on the surface.*

Long after I had reached the conclusion that God is a Being in his very nature infinitely

* The ingrained and hardened scoundrel can act his part so cleverly that we mistake him for a fine young man. When all is over and his character comes out plainly it may be that a few who had known him well will recall certain trivial acts and words, which, in the light of his great crimes, they now interpret as having given timely intimation of his true character. Very sensitive and finely constituted natures, it may be remembered, always shrank from him, even when he strove to be most obliging and polite, though for this they could give no reason.

On the other hand: A worn and haggard countenance, mysterious movements, disregard of the common courtesies of life; in short a mysterious and even suspicious character. Who is he? Whence came he? Ah, he has spent time and money, and many a sleepless night, has risked his life many a time in conducting poor fugitives safely beyond the reach of savage blood-hounds. A heroically benevolent and tender-hearted man. Now in the light of his shining virtues and Christian heroism, every word and act is interpreted favorably.

What is the lesson towards which these and like well-known facts point? Is it not simply this? Real character is always brought out, always indicated. The dominate attribute of character never recedes, never abdicates, but is always dominant. "The ointment of the right hand betrayeth itself."

merciful, and after I had in vain striven to find something like a vindication of sin and misery in the notion that without these there had been no scope and room for the exercise and display of the real and whole character of God,— his infinite goodness, that is, his infinite mercifulness, which I then thought could in no sense and to no extent be displayed *but for sin and misery*,— I began to perceive that mercy being merely the highest form of goodness,— the goodness of God, from which mercy arises, goodness which culminates in mercy to our race, was goodness which might be so exercised and so displayed, not only in dealing with holy beings who kept their first estate, but even in dealing with those who fell and were irretrievably lost, as to suggest, nay, to *prove*, him to be a Being in himself essentially and infinitely merciful; a Being whose character as merciful could not but come gloriously into view in dealing with all moral beings, and even with sentient beings — a Being whose government is always and everywhere necessarily and unchangeably merciful as well as just.* I became satisfied that the main reason orthodox

* The righteousness of good government is indeed that which it is fit all should see and take note of. It is well that those who can be restrained only by the terrors of the law, should have

theologians hesitate to ascribe infinite mercifulness to God in dealing with *all* his creatures, is a lurking conceit or fallacy of this kind: that to show mercy is to do that which in its very nature involves the resiling of justice or exact righteousness. And this same conceit — that there *can* be mercy by the mere resiling of justice — is also the reason so many have in all ages been hurried on to the conclusion that there must be sooner or later the restoration of all the lapsed.

But to show mercy is to show at the same time, and by the same act, righteousness also. For he cannot be a merciful being who is not also a righteous being. He cannot show mercy unless he also show forth his righteousness. Indeed it seemed to me clear as noonday that the way of salvation, so fully revealed in Scripture, was the grand setting forth of this great truth that mercy consists in satisfying justice — of course always and necessarily by the able and willing in behalf of the weak and helpless. The far-reaching and profound significance of this truth, it is to be feared, is not always

ever before them the absolute righteousness of the government. It is not surprising that this characteristic of government should be first and mainly regarded. The finer, higher traits of government are not so readily seen.

seen. For if God in showing mercy shows most clearly the righteousness of his character, it is not at all incredible that he, in dealing with the impenitent, should show clearly and fully the mercifulness of his character. If it be said that those who suffer the penalty of his justice really experience no mercy, let it be considered that there is an exactly corresponding paradox (if you will so regard it) in that those who enjoy the mercy of God feel not the slightest stroke of his justice; and yet his justice is most gloriously "*declared*"[1] and displayed in the very transaction by which mercy is shown to them.

This view, while it does not propose any solution of the dark problem of the existence of evil, or the yet more dark problem of the perpetuity of evil, it *does assign that problem to its proper place.* And this is what, after all, we must come to; for the darkest enigmas are only distressing when they are placed where they ought not to be. To assume that God creates moral beings with whom he deals on the ground of pure, mere, and exact justice, so that they, now and to all eternity, may truly say,

[1] Rom. III.: 25. "*To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.*"

"*we* know nothing of any goodness of God beyond mere justice;" to imagine that "there had been fewer sufferers had God been more merciful"— no one will be bold enough to *say* this, yet many do confidently affirm that which logically and inevitably implies just this — is quite a different thing from saying: "All moral beings, the lost as well as the saved (the lost as well as the saved of mankind and of angels), have been dealt with according to the real and the whole character of God, the one class as well as the other having known him to be in his character and in *the sum of his dealings with them*, not only infinitely just, but infinitely merciful. Indeed God's dealings even with the *un*deserving — all the creatures of his hand; for what he bestows upon them they have no claim to — may be such as to indicate and foreshadow his dealings with the *ill*-deserving. God's dealings with all his creatures show forth all his perfections, pre-eminently his goodness, that is his mercifulness. "His mercy is over all his other works." "His mercy fills the heavens." All the works and ways of God in the constitution of his creatures, and in the provision for their well-being, — not excepting, but including, the reign and

prevalence of absolute law, with its rewards and penalties,— we should regard as evidence of God's character in its highest and utmost gloriousness. The whole gospel, the utmost mercy of God to his redeemed, the real character of God, indicated in the whole course of his providence, even in his dealings with the least of his creatures — just this is brought out clearly in the discourses of our Lord Christ — so that we ought to consider God's dealings *with*, *in*, and *for*, the least and lowliest creatures on the earth as proving him to be in his character and attributes a being who *would* deal with sinners in the very manner in which he, in his grace, actually dealeth with our race.

Very gloriously doth the light break in upon the whole hemisphere of thought when it becomes plain to us that God, in all his works and in all his ways, in his dealings with all beings, reveals himself the infinitely good Being that he is, the infinitely merciful Being.

"God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." But if God is "infinite, eternal and unchangeable . . . in his goodness," let it not be thought that infinite, eternal and

unchangeable goodness only occasionally rises up to mercifulness. For he who, on occasion, proves to be merciful, we know *was* in himself merciful, even had there been no occasion. But in the sum of God's dealings with moral beings occasion for the exercise of his infinite perfections is never wanting.

His mercifulness is mere goodness. What he has done for the well-being of all his creatures, since it is what they had no claim to, since it is free favor from pure and mere goodness, does not merely suggest; it proves him to be what in his grace in Christ he has so fully revealed himself to be. His feeding the ravens that cry, his care for the sparrows, all the wondrous provision for the well-being of living creatures *we* could not have interpreted; yet when *interpreted for us*, as in Holy Scripture, as in the words of Christ our Lord, even *we* can *discern*, and with all joy and confidence accept.

Nothing in the range of religious literature is more shocking than the grave and solemn declarations to the effect that God might have wholly refrained from showing himself merciful in his dealings with our race, without at all detracting

from his character. The actual mercy which God in any instance showeth unto any violator of law cannot be mercy which he, being the God he is, might not have shown. It is indeed free, gracious, pure mercy, proceeding from God, who is free in the highest conceivable sense in which a being can be free. Yet this freedom, so far from depending upon the possibility of a different course, is but heightened if that impossibility arise solely from the excellence of his character; *i.e.*, if his nature and character render such action, and such alone, really possible to him.* There are frightful results logically following from any lower view; as that a being may be good who is not merciful. But God's word expressly requires mercifulness of all men. No one is godlike who does not show himself merciful as well as just, in his dealings with his fellowmen. Besides, if we make it the main ground of our high praise of divine mercy, that it is what God might have

* Indeed, what are we taught in that notable appeal which the Lord by his prophet makes, when he asks: "Can a woman forget" — or in that other which our Saviour makes when he says: "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts"? if not that, what is possible to even the best and the most loving of parents, is impossible to God; his nature, his divine perfections making the one best way, the only way?

refrained from, we do impliedly, yet very plainly, reduce the estimate we make of all those acts or works of God which, by universal confession, could not but be as they are. "God that cannot lie." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Ah, the truth and the justice of God assured by the very nature of God: are these less praiseworthy on this account?

There is indeed ground for the distinction between the natural and the moral attributes of God. This distinction is quite as obvious to the child as to the theologian or the philosopher. We "admire and adore God for his knowledge, his wisdom and his power: we praise and give thanks to him for his goodness."

There is *no ground* for the distinction so often insisted upon, between the moral *attributes themselves*. They *all* "arise by necessity from his nature:" they all are included in, or, rather, constitute his goodness. And goodness apart from mercifulness, is not found on earth or in heaven. The utmost mercy of God proceeds from his whole nature; is the utmost manifestation of his goodness; his utmost self-manifestation.

Groups of fallacies arise from any lower view

of virtue. The idea of any excellence, any mercy in God, not from the very nature of God, is followed by the very absurd, but very prevalent, idea of virtue in creatures above that which even the divine law enjoins. Accordingly men deal quite nonchalantly with their "*must*" and their "*may*" when speaking of man's obligations, man's duty, in his dealings with his fellow-men.* As if God were more solicitous about the lower forms of virtue; as if God had not commanded mercy and forgiveness precisely as he has commanded any other duty. As if God had not himself set the greatest example, and expressly commanded all to be imitators of the same.

Much stress is laid upon the fact that it is the prerogative of the ruler to determine in any given case whether it is one in which it is fit and proper that mercy should be shown. Those taking refuge in this view seem oblivious of the fact that this

* The notions generally entertained regarding the obligations that rest on the followers of Christ are pitiably and even ludicrously defective. What the favored and prosperous Christian people "owe" to their fellow-men not one in ten thousand as yet even suspects. The *imperativeness*, the *definiteness* of the *divine law requiring* charity, myriads of Christians never once discover. They never dream that the "imitation of Christ" is *required* of *them*.

carries with it by plain implication, that this same prerogative may also determine in any given case whether justice shall be executed. But if prerogative determine mercy it is not only reasonable that it *may* determine justice; it *does thereby* determine justice.

Indeed, in dealing with his creatures all the perfections of the divine nature are displayed in their fulness and harmony — the wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth at once and not separately — and this quite irrespective of the issue and result; quite irrespective of the doom or destiny of any of those with whom God thus dealeth.

If it seem rash or unwarrantable to hold that those who are condemned and sentenced to perpetual punishment for their sins have had abundant proof, and proof in God's actual *dealings with them*, even in their condemnation, that he who condemns them is a most merciful Being, though they share not his mercy; let it be considered that this is not a whit more wonderful, or to be questioned, than that the saved who experience his infinite mercy have had — *and have had in God's dealings with them for their salvation* — the most

full and awful manifestation that God is a Being of infinite justice.

The justice of God, the necessarily infinite righteousness of God, which may be thought to be that which determines the overthrow of the impenitent, is but one of the glorious attributes of the one infinitely good Being in whom all perfections are united and act ever in utmost harmony; so that he who is most merciful never in any case acts *as if* he were merely and only just.

To attribute certain kinds of action or work to certain faculties, attributes, or powers of a moral being, and not to the person, the whole being is a prevalent but inexcusable error. As a ship at sea, as any vessel, from the smallest to the largest, that ever ventured on the deep, moves bodily and wholly, whether by the gentlest swell of the waves or by those which "mount up to heaven and go down again to the depths," moves bodily and wholly, whether driven by the furious gale or pressed by the gentlest zephyr, so any being who acts, acts the being that he is; the least act is *his* as truly as the greatest; and for the least as for the greatest *he* is praiseworthy or blameworthy, and not *this* or *that faculty* or *attribute*.

Not only this; but in all moral beings there is in the nature of the case one dominant attribute, one lofty regal motive, one that never abdicates, one whereunto all else is in true subordination. In man's present estate it may not always be easy to determine what is the dominant attribute; although even admitting this, it is always assumed that there *is* such. Witness the diverse views even yet entertained respecting Cromwell's "ruling motive."

But we are not left in doubt as to the dominant attribute of the Supreme Being, "the darling attribute," as the old divines delighted to call it. Scripture settles forever this matter. "God is" — justice? "God is" — power? "God is" — goodness? No; "*God is — love.*"

Who that has ever followed the adventurous Dante to the close of his "Divina Comedia," that has ever felt the charm and the spell of that marvellous product of sanctified genius, but has been profoundly moved on reading:

". . . that love
Which moves the sun in heaven and all the stars."

In this surprising expression who can fail to see the poet, the Christian, the theologian, the philoso-

pher? Why not that *power* "which moves the sun and all the stars"? Simply because to the true "seer" there is ever that which is higher than power, even as heaven is higher than the earth. Rather, to the true "seer," power in its utmost height, power in its supremest triumph, power in its crowning achievement is, and can be, nothing less, nothing lower, nothing other than *love*.

That every work is of the whole person, and is expressive of the true and the whole character, we may clearly see, even when we confess that it is impossible that *we* could so understand, so weigh, and so analyze the work that from *it alone* we could judge of the person or character.

God doeth nothing except as God, nothing except in a godlike manner; nothing except with godlike end and aim. Nor is there any one work or act of God in nature, providence or redemption that is not a part of the one self-manifestation which God maketh; which self-manifestation embraces and comprehends and unifies all that God doeth "*ab extra*" in the unit immensity and in the unit eternity, including the supreme self-manifestation which crowns and unites all others in itself, even that which he makes in his

Only Begotten, who is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person. Therefore only by learning the true character of God — we can learn this only by means of his word and his grace — can any one rightly interpret any of the works of God. What God means by the "flowers of the field" which we look upon, no one can know except such as are instructed by the word, such as have learned by Scripture (and by gracious experience) that "God is love," and that "*God so loved the world.*"

For if God is love, then all that God doeth in nature he doeth because he so loved. Almightiness, then, "so loving," maketh all things work together "for good"; and whoso otherwise interpreteth any work or way of God, misinterpreteth such work or way. It is well. The Lord reigneth. He doeth all things well. "What we know not now we shall know hereafter." His infinite goodness, yes, his infinite goodness *to us*, we shall yet learn has been shown not by *some* but by *all* his works and ways to us-ward. "The whole paths of the Lord our God are mercy and truth."[1] "How precious also are thy thoughts towards me;

[1] Ps. xxv. : 10.

if I should count them they are more than the sand."[1]

God is himself in dealing with the penitent: he is himself in dealing with the impenitent. The "*role*" in which *men* act may vary, God's never. God doeth nothing that doth not show forth what he is.

I am aware that to most persons it must, at first view, appear a rash and untenable position to assume that in all cases violators of law are dealt with in a way which brings out clearly, fully and gloriously the real and whole character of God, not only as he is a righteous, but especially as he is a merciful, a most merciful Being. For to most persons it will seem quite certain that since violators of law really deserve to suffer the penalty annexed to their violation, whatever that may be; and since they deserve not and share not the divine goodness, there is no necessity for the coming into view of the goodness, much less the mercifulness of God, but of his justice. That many should take just this view of the case is not surprising. The present dispensation of mercy is not generally rightly interpreted. Indeed the

[1] Ps. cxxxix.: 17.

failure to interpret aright God's merciful dealings with man, is the chief indictment against mankind. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"[1] But has not God instructed all mankind, and all on-looking intelligences, in regard to his character, and in regard to his dealings with his creatures, by the dispensation of mercy under which he deals with our race? And in what way except by the study of God's actual dealings with the race of mankind, can we hope to come to a just view of the divine government? Apart from the transcendent lesson which we learn, not only from revelation, but from the actual government of this world, as observed by all,— even those who have no single ray of light from the word of God, — we might, indeed, assume that justice unaccompanied by mercy might be the rule in the government of God.

The estate of our fallen race, it may be assumed, is quite exceptional, though even this might, not without reason, be seriously questioned; yet, exceptional, unexampled or unique as it may be

[1] Rom. II. : 4.

regarded, it does not follow that the principles exemplified, even in dealing with a case that *is* exceptional, should not be the same on which the divine government everywhere proceeds. Surely unless this be true, *we* of the race of mankind should be shut out from all hope of coming to the knowledge of God. The notion of a divine government that is everywhere administered in strict and exact justice, a government in which the element of mercifulness is wanting — except in the small department of it in which we are situated — is a notion which comes, not by our reasoning "from the known to the unknown," but one which proceeds from our failing to learn thoroughly, and to keep ever before us, what God by his word and by his dealings with our race, both in his providence and in his grace by Jesus Christ, ever teacheth us; even that his government may be at once most righteous and most merciful.

CHAPTER IV.

MERCIFUL GOVERNMENT.

Is the ideal or perfect government merely for the administration of justice without constitutional or legal provision for mercy; is it required and bound to administer law without mercy; and if in any case mercy be shown, must it be considered exceptional and an interference with the normal and proper administration of government? Is mercifulness a virtue or excellence which may or may not characterize the perfect ruler and the perfect government; something which no law, human or divine, requires, but a matter wholly at the option of the ruler, so that the utter disregard of it by human government is no violation of constitutional or legal obligation, and is neither punishable nor blameworthy?

That the divine government is administered in mere justice, and that the Supreme Being in show-

ing himself to be merciful to our race departed from the established order, — perhaps the only departure to be believed to have taken place in the universe; — that to us he has shown himself in a character in which he is unknown to any other of his creatures, is a view which has long prevailed.

One great difficulty in the way of a right conception of this subject arises from the prevalent notion that there is "an independent moral law," a self-existent standard of right unto which not merely all creatures, but even the Uncreated himself must conform; that is, he must be just while he may or may not be merciful. For it is thought that even he must recognize and conform to "absolute, self-existent and eternal right," — which it is assumed exists independently of him. This impersonal, "independent moral law," it is assumed, makes justice, but not mercy, an essential element in all government.

But "He is before all things," and it is His nature which itself fixes and determines absolute right. The so-called "independent moral law" is "*of Him*," and not a law *for* or *upon* Him. His existence, his attributes, his character renders righteous government a necessity.

But if the divine nature, the divine character, — the standard of right,— determine and ensure justice always and everywhere in the divine government, are we at liberty to imagine that mercy whensoever it be shown proceedeth from the mere will, and not from the whole nature, the harmonious action of all the attributes, the whole character of God, so that for *him* to have done otherwise in any given case would have been as unworthy of him, as to have done otherwise in any given case in the administration of justice? There is indeed no obligation from without; yet the very nature of God ensures that his government shall be a merciful as well as a righteous government.

A government should be in its qualities fully up to the standard of the character, the highest excellence of him who governs. The utmost goodness of the Supreme Being must not be imagined to be kept back, to be unexercised or unexpressed in the government which he exercises over all his creatures. To imagine a reserve of goodness in the Supreme Ruler which only on rare occasions may, and therefore necessarily may not be shown, is really to dishonor him. He is righteous: but he is also merciful; his mer-

cifulness is in Scripture quite as fully and plainly declared as is his righteousness; and this cannot mean merely that he is a Being capable of showing mercy; for it is expressly declared that his mercy is over all his works, and that his mercy endureth forever.

The long-accepted view that there is a difference between the grounds of the righteousness and the mercifulness of the divine government in that the one is universal and therefore necessary, while the other is neither necessary nor universal, but rare and exceptional, is one which is not only unsupported in Scripture or reason, but is, in itself, self-contradictory, as may readily be seen. It proceeds on the assumption that righteousness, though necessary and universal in the divine government, may, in rare cases, yield that there may be room and scope for mercy. It proceeds on the assumption that in dealing with any world or any race of his creatures the Supreme Being is under a necessity to choose between these two courses: either he must deal with them on the ground of justice or on the ground of mercy; if he is merciful, he cannot deal righteously, and if he deal in justice he cannot deal mercifully with them.

But since God is at once righteous *and* merciful, and since in him these attributes are ever in perfect harmony, he not only may be, he cannot but be — not indeed because of any independent law, but by reason of his own nature — always and in all his dealings with his creatures at *the same time* righteous and merciful. Justice so far from being set aside or obscured is necessarily and gloriously shown forth in divine mercy. His real and his whole character, his utmost excellence shines forth always and in all that he does. But the view above referred to makes neither righteousness nor mercifulness characteristic of the divine government.

By the careful study of such government as man is familiar with, we may get some intimation of what the ideal, that is, the divine, government must be.

Government by man, it may be assumed, should be a type or pattern of the supreme government. But government by man in our present estate seldom has aimed higher than the mere maintenance of justice. We must not thence thoughtlessly conclude that it is in this respect a true type of the divine government. For it is not a perfection, but

a defect of human government that it is mainly for the ensuring of justice. In this respect it is in contrast with, rather than a pattern of, the divine. It is not the ideal, the very best that could be imagined, nor even the best to be attained by mankind; for beneficent government is the great promise and the great hope of humanity.

But in government by man, and in the regular and ordinary administration of government, there is always *constitutional* and *legal* provision for mercy. It is indeed true that the exercise of the constitutional and legal right and prerogative in all, or even in very many cases, would be deprecated and condemned by the judgment of all. Nevertheless, it could be condemned only as an *abuse* of a constitutional and legal right. Here, then, is a notable fact of the utmost significance — government by man makes the showing of mercy a right and prerogative of the sovereign or the administrator; and this without restriction; *i.e.*, as a legal matter it is not exceptional at all; its rareness is due solely to the discretion of the executive.

But is it not thus clear as noonday that the sovereign ruler, in his discretion, judges that it is proper to show mercy only rarely — not because

the constitution inhibits or throws any barrier in the way, not for want of constitutional and legal right — but because *only rarely* is it in the power of the government to do so, and at the same time maintain in full force and in honor the majesty of the law, and secure and maintain the claims of justice? Surely, then, provided there were any way by which these ends could be secured, that is, provided the administrator of law were able to devise and carry out any plan or scheme, in the use of all the resources at his command, by which, in showing mercy, the law should be fulfilled, magnified, and made honorable, he would not only have constitutional and legal right to do so, but would receive the commendation of all in *thus* showing mercy. Therefore, duly and fully considered, it is but the simple truth that even human governments do not make the showing of mercy necessarily rare and exceptional. Human governments are fundamentally merciful as well as just.* And if mercy is rarely shown it is only because of the rareness of the cases in which the resources at

* From no culprit apprehended and under trial is this merciful feature of government for a moment hidden. There may indeed be little ground for *him* to hope to experience the clemency or mercy; yet this clearly defined characteristic of

hand are ample for securing the ends of justice in showing mercy.

Government merely for the administration of justice? Government with no constitutional provision for the exercise of mercy? Government which in its nature and constitution is prohibited from showing mercy? Government required and bound to execute in every case the sentence of strict justice?

There is not, there never was, such government set up on earth, even by the most barbarous of the tribes of mankind. No; and had there been, it had been the very opposite of the divine government. For it had been satanic, and not godlike.

Constitutional and legal provision for mercy is found in every government set up by man on earth.

the mightiest, the strictest and even the most cruel government, he keeps ever in view, on and on till the death warrant is signed — and the signing of the death warrant is not a clerical or perfunctory act; it implies the right to refuse to sign, or the power to show mercy — yes, on and on till the moment of the execution. That this feature of government should be maintained, as it is, in the face of the furious clamor of an outraged public, that government even in dealing with the most desperate culprits should continue to show itself to be, in its constitution, in its law and in its administration, merciful as well as just, is, all things considered, most amazing and most instructive. In it we have the consensus of mankind that government must be essentially, fundamentally merciful as well as just; yes, merciful even while proceeding in awful majesty in the administration of justice.

This feature or characteristic of human government is as uniform, fundamental, and indispensable and every way as well-defined and established as is the provision for the execution of justice.

We have in this the consensus of mankind, in all ages and in all stages of his advancement, that the element of mercifulness not only *may* be and not only *ought* to be, but *must be* in every government which man, being man, can set up, or even tolerate.

The nation — which always constitutes the government and always in one form or another gives law to the government (i.e., determines its rights, duties and aims and methods) — really says, and says to the governing power, the executive, the legislative and the judicial, to the whole government, "Be just. Administer justice, render to every one his due. Punish with deserved punishments the violators of law?" Indeed, and is this all? By no means; what then? Does the nation proceed to say, "Show no mercy? Government is for the mere administration of justice?" Rather the nation says:

"Government must be merciful as well as just." And to this end the sovereign — and this whether

hereditary, whether king, emperor, president, governor, or in what manner soever made sovereign and by what title soever designated — shall be charged and entrusted with the power and the right, and therefore with the duty and the obligation to exercise mercy; so that in this, his action shall be altogether quite as legitimate, constitutional and unquestionable as in the administration of justice itself.

This right or prerogative shall be unrestricted. It shall be left to the sovereign himself alone (or to that body of men, few or many, in which the nation lays sovereign power) to determine in each case whether mercy shall or shall not be shown. This broad and sweeping recognition of the place and scope of mercy as an attribute of human government ought to be very carefully studied. He who thinks that human government is for the mere maintenance of justice, and that it is in this respect the type of the divine government in its constitution and in the ordinary course of its administration, really fails to take in the most obvious and most striking, most excellent, most exalted and most admirable feature of both human and divine government.

True, he cannot but see that human governments may sometimes, or very rarely, show mercy; but this he regards as aside from the ordinary course, and not in the line of the great ends for which government is instituted and maintained.

And he thinks that in like manner the divine government, while it also is for the maintenance of justice, may as a rare exception be merciful.

But let it be noticed that human governments by their very constitution are (1) required to be merciful as well as just. (2) That the showing of mercy is entrusted wholly to the sovereign administration. (3) Therefore the sovereign, should he show mercy in any given case, would be acting legally and constitutionally, and this, though in such case his action should be most unwise and reprehensible.

The discretion of the sovereign or the administration, then, is the sole limit to the exercise of mercy. Mercy shown by the sovereign is never unconstitutional or illegal, though it be never so unwise or improper. This fact is itself one that is truly wonderful. It should teach us that mercifulness is an essential feature of every moral person,

whether an individual or a government, and one that even poor, short-sighted mortals will not suffer to be wanting in any government which they set up and sustain, or even tolerate here on earth.

But what are the grounds or conditions upon which the sovereign is to exercise his discretion in showing mercy? His right to show mercy in any one case, and therefore in every case, is clear and indisputable. And yet it is also as clearly and fully expected of him that he shall exercise this right — rarely? No, *wisely;* and if wisely, *therefore* rarely; which is by no means the same thing, but quite another and a different thing, as anyone may readily see

What, then, is to determine the exercise of that mercy which it is the constitutional and legal right of the sovereign to exercise in any, and therefore in every case? Why in point of fact is this mercy shown rarely? Why is it never extended so as to be shown to all violators of law — (as it assuredly might be without any violation of that law which the nation prescribes for the government, the actual sovereign or administration)?

The answer is: Mercy ought not to be shown

except in those cases in which the claims of justice and of law can be maintained and vindicated at *the same time* and by the *same transaction* by which mercy is shown. This it is which restricts the showing of mercy. Surely any sovereign on earth might, with the approbation of all, show mercy in absolutely every case in which he sees clearly that he can do this without prejudice to the cause of justice.

Surely now it must be manifest that even in human government the showing of mercy is not rare and exceptional because the nature and constitution of government requires that it be so, not because of a supposed want of any provision for mercy in the constitution of government, and much less because of a supposed opposition of government to mercy, but because of the rareness of the cases in which mercy can be shown and yet justice be vindicated and maintained.

But are we not then constrained to see that it is merely the meagreness or poverty of the resources of the government that makes it a rare thing that mercy is shown? The government itself is in its whole structure and character and constitution

merciful. When mercifulness pervades, illumines, irradiates the whole moral person, whether an individual or a government, it is not diabolical, satanical and horrible, but heavenly and godlike and beneficent. Man will not set up, man will not endure, even on this earth, a government in which this glorious and high attribute, the merciful, is wholly wanting.

When with these facts before us we lift up our eyes to the divine government which so gloriously overarches all government by man, or by creatures, shall we make the great mistake of supposing that because human governments rarely show themselves merciful, because they are occupied mainly in maintaining justice, the divine government is for the maintenance of justice; so that *its mercifulness can be brought into view only rarely*, so that mercy is, and must be, even in the divine government, "exceptional"?

This conclusion would stand only if it were true that God could not at the same time show himself to be both merciful and just. But the main truth which the whole history of God's dealings with our race was designed to teach to man, and to all worlds, is simply this: "God can be most merci-

ful and most righteous at the same time and in the same transaction."

The divine government then in all its extent and as it moves on in awful majesty and glory is a perpetual manifestation not merely of the justice of the Supreme Ruler, but of his real and whole character even as he himself proclaimed it to Moses: "The Lord merciful and gracious. . . and will by no means clear the guilty." And let it not be thought that there is no significance in the order in which the attributes of God are proclaimed; for surely in this way we are at once arrested by the presentation of that attribute of the Divine Being which in its nature is highest and brightest, and that one which really is the showing forth of all the other attributes in their harmony, constituting the one glorious and perfect Divine Being.

Sovereign Prerogative in Showing Mercy.

The view which I have set forth in the foregoing pages of this chapter, and elsewhere, respecting the essential mercifulness of all government, human or divine, it is thought is quite overturned, quite nullified by the simple assertion that

"Mercy is, in human and divine government, always at the *mere will* of the sovereign."

To the fallacy which underlies this and like objections, I now ask the candid attention of the reader.

Mercy a sovereign prerogative, mercy left to the will of the sovereign — king, emperor, president or governor — and even more manifestly to Him who is higher than the kings of the earth. This ought not for a moment to be called in question.

Consider, first, mercy as wholly in the power of the earthly sovereign. Why thus left in his power? Why is he the one to judge and decide in what cases mercy may be shown? Is it because in reality in any given case what *ought to be done* is in itself uncertain or undetermined, or even necessarily undiscoverable? By no means. But because what ought to be done in each case *cannot be foreseen* or *predetermined* by the nation which frames the constitution, or by any law or any rule which human legislators can prescribe.

What is it, then? When any human sovereign exercises this, his high prerogative, is he to say:

"Ah, now in this matter there is no rule, no

law, no obligation upon me; I am in my other official acts to be guided by constitutional and legal enactments, and beyond this I am answerable and amenable to the eternal and absolute and very definite law of righteousness in all my other acts; but in this, in the exercise of my prerogative in showing mercy, my will is law to me, I may do as I please?"

No; so far from this, the chief magistrate should realize that *what ought to be done* by him in the exercise of his high prerogative is always distinct, explicit, definite; it may be difficult for him to discover what ought to be done, yet never for a moment should he forget that there *is* a distinct definite duty or obligation, one that comes down upon him with awful solemnity and power even from the throne and law and glory of God most high; so that in the exercise of his prerogative in showing mercy in any case he should aim to obey the higher, the highest law. And he should see clearly that in thus obeying the command and imitating the example of the Supreme Law-giver, Judge and King, he acts in strict accordance with the constitution and the law determined for him by the nation of whose government he is the head.

The mercy he thus shows in the highest exercise of his sovereign prerogative is mercy justified, authorized by the command and example of God, and by the express letter of the constitution and laws of the commonwealth.

It is, then, but the simple truth to say: The sovereign or the chief magistrate of any government among men in showing mercy in any given case, so far from being free to act according to the mere impulse of his own will, so far from being free to do either of two ways, is under most solemn obligation to act as under the law of God, while at the same time he acts in strict accordance with the constitution and law of the nation. He is indeed the *one* to judge whether this case is one in which mercy *ought* to be shown, or one in which mercy *can* be shown, even by all the resources at hand or at all available; but, having decided this one question, he can go forward with the assurance that he is obeying and carrying out the distinct and express and most admirable provision of all government, human or divine.

But it may be said that the sovereign prerogative of the Supreme Ruler in showing mercy, unlike that of even the highest earthly sovereign, must

not be thought to be restricted or determined except by his mere will.

Realizing that a subject of this kind should be approached with most profound reverence and humility, and giving careful and respectful attention to the views so fully set forth in the writings of the theologians regarding the divine sovereignty in the matter of His showing mercy, I am persuaded that, with the very best of intentions, they have set forth a view which is not only unscriptural and unreasonable, but one that the human mind, as *God has made it*, cannot accept and *rest in*, as the whole truth in the case.

While I not only freely admit that there is no law, no obligation, but strenuously contend that there is not even an "independent moral law" or "a self-existent absolute right" which can be thought to determine any one of the divine decisions, I yet maintain that there is no decision of the divine will which is not determined both by the nature, character and attributes of God, and by the nature of the whole case in regard to which the divine decision is made.

2. What God shall do in any given case is determined by *what God is*, and by *what the case*

*is.** What God shall do in the exercise of his sovereignty is determined by what he is; and this quite as definitely and unalterably as what any sovereign under him should do is determined by the divine law in any manner made known. Decisions of mere will are never made by rational beings. In morals there are never two right ways. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right" cannot mean simply this: Which way soever the Judge of all the earth decides it shall be right. That he will always do that which is best we on good grounds confidently believe; that is, we are so fully assured that he will do what is

* "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy" must not be interpreted to mean that his will acts in this matter either without regard to his own nature or character, or without regard to the real case as it is, with infinite clearness, seen by him. "Hath not the potter power (right R. V.) over the clay?" This does not mean that God deals with the work of his hands in a way unlike that which man may deal with what is in his power. It by no means countenances the too prevalent notion that God, because he is God, doeth that which moral beings may not imitate. It is but the assertion of the lordship of him who made us. The principle is that the maker is lord of what he makes, a principle which holds of any and every maker. Man's right to imitate is rather asserted than denied in this notable text.

"What is man that thou art mindful of him" does not mean that there is nothing in man on account of which God has made such marvelous provision for his well-being in this life and in the life to come.

right that we need no other evidence of its being right than that he hath done it. But this must not be thought to give the slightest countenance to the idea that of any two ways, either can be made right by the mere decision of will. All difficulty in regard to this matter is quite removed by the simple acceptance of the doctrine that God's own nature determines all his acts. He is law to himself, his acts, his example, his self-manifestation by means of all that he hath done in creation, providence and redemption; is law unto all beings, from the highest to the lowest; law which overarches and governs and determines the highest acts of the highest sovereignty wherewith any created being can be invested. God's law, God's example, expressly requires that every moral person, an individual or a government, a private individual or the chief magistrate, should be merciful; and not only this, but God's law, God's example requires and fixes with absolute precision *every act* of mercy which the merciful individual or merciful sovereign ought to perform. And to get a clear view of this definite requirement should be the earnest prayer and constant endeavor of every one who is a subject of law.

PART II.

MERCY

BY

SATISFACTION OF LAW.

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CHAPTER I.

LAW PREVAILS.

In creation, so far as man can in any way come to the knowledge of it, there is no sign or hint that there is any particle of matter, or even any portion of space, that is not a perpetual witness to the presence and prevalence of absolute law. And law, as it everywhere prevails, no created being can "*mock*," evade, or interfere with in the slightest degree.* On the contrary, all progress in knowledge or in work is due to the prevalence of invariable law; to the reliableness, the uniformity, the continuity of law. Created beings, even the very highest, find room and scope for their noblest powers without the slightest interference with the uniformity of law governing all that the Creator hath called into existence.

* Strictly speaking, *no law*, whether natural or moral, can be broken. It is *always the violator* of law, and not the law, that is "broken."

That the glorious purposes of the Creator himself are for the most part accomplished, not only without interference with, but *by means of* the infinitely exact, invariable, and withal, most beneficent laws which he ordained, cannot for a moment be called in question. But it is thought that he, in the accomplishment of *some* of his most glorious purposes — especially his purpose of mercy to our race — may not only suspend natural law, but relax or set aside the claims of moral law, by the exercise of his mere will or his sovereign prerogative. Again and again we are thus instructed: "God, while ordinarily he worketh by means of the law which he has imposed upon all that he has made, is above law; he can relax, modify, or suspend it at will."

Now if law were self-existent, or were something apart from God, it might be proof of his excellence, his superiority, that he should relax or set it aside. But law in all its extent, as it prevails everywhere, is *nothing but his will;* and his will changeth not. Not only is it true that the most glorious manifestations of his perfections may be made without relaxing or suspending any one of the laws which he has ordained; but it is true that

his highest self-manifestation in his mercy to us *consisted in* the fulfilment of law.

The will of God in the form of law governing matter or mind is in no way a barrier to the accomplishment of the very highest and holiest ends which any created being can set before him. The will of God in the form of law, as law now everywhere prevails, is no barrier in the way of the most glorious work of God himself.

Law is nothing but the will of the Supreme Lawgiver, and he changeth not. We know that his will *now*, in regard to any matter, is the same that it was in eternity. Every reason which could be imagined for willing and ordering any change, any interference with the reign of law, must have been present to the mind of the Law-giver in eternity. Reason for change cannot spring up "*de novo*" in the view of him to whom the future and the past are as the present.

The notion which most of all leads some good and reverent minds to admit the possibility of such interference is that in this way it is thought the goodness of God can be specially shown forth; as if the real character of the Creator had not found expression in his laws as they were ordained from

the beginning, and as they now prevail; as if providence by uniform, invariable, and harmonious movement of law, did not sufficiently set forth the goodness of the Deity; as if the divine law were not the expression of the divine perfections, and pre-eminently of the divine beneficence.

But it is thought that to show mercy in any instance it is necessary that there be some interference with law. It is thought that the supreme example of mercy — that shown to our race by the mediation of Christ — necessarily involves if not a suspension, at least a relaxation of law. So far from this being the case, the mercy shown to us not only leaves law undisturbed in its reign, it consists in complete satisfaction of law in all its claims and demands, both as regards penalty and obedience. This is what Christ accomplished. In doing this he ensured for us all the mercy we need, all that God hath for us.

The misconception of the very nature of mercy — as necessarily involving if not a suspension, at least a relaxation of law, a mitigation of its penalty, and this by mere arbitrary decision of the divine will — has given occasion for the most prevalent prejudice against the whole doctrine of redemption by Christ.

The clear recognition, the frank and full acceptance of the simple truth that law always and everywhere prevails undisturbed, and that every instance of escape from impending danger on account of this reign and prevalence of law, from the least to the greatest, is afforded by intervention of adequate power or agency meeting and satisfying law, simply takes away all excuse for this prevalent prejudice, leaves no standing ground for this the most plausible of all the objections against the revealed evangelical scheme of redemption.

The purely evangelical doctrine, and not any one of the heretical theories of redemption, is the doctrine which is wholly free from this objection. For then redemption by Christ is the assertion of the undisturbed reign of law. Because law prevails everywhere, because law cannot be mocked, relaxed, or its penalties mitigated, it was necessary that Christ should come, should make atonement, and thus restore to righteousness and thus save all who should come to him.

Conceding at the outset the absoluteness of law, maintaining that redemption by Christ is simply the supreme exemplification of the one only way of escape from the penalties of law, whether natu-

ral or moral, that is, by intervention of adequate power,* no standing room is then left for any of the legion forms of heresy regarding the way of salvation by the atonement of Christ, with which the Church has had to contend in all ages; and no shadow of excuse is left for that most plausible and prevalent objection to the revealed way of salvation; for then human redemption is unspeakably the most grand and awe-inspiring instance and example of the power and prevalence of absolute and exact law, while it is at the same time the most glorious, cheering, hope-inspiring instance and example of God's only way of deliverance; a way of deliverance foreshadowed and typified by every instance of deliverance, from the greatest to the least, in the history of the human race; yes, foreshadowed and even typified in the protection afforded to sentient beings from such dangers and evils as threaten them under the reign of law governing them, and all the elements round about them.

A Word with "the Philosophers."

In all ages, perhaps somewhat more confidently in recent times, the opponents of the pure gospel

* See Chapter "Intervention" in "Atonement and Law."

either assert or assume that their objection to the evangelical view arises from the fact that they are philosophers. And thus "the philosophers" always reason: "We see no instance of suspension of law, no mitigation of its penalties; we nowhere discover any break in the chain of causes which holds between the present and the past. Indeed, we see no reason to think that this world—and all that from it man beholds — is governed otherwise than by law, and law that is universal, uniform, invariable in its operation; law that is never repealed or relaxed. Now, you come to us with the account of a wonderful, an astounding, a solitary departure from the method which we everywhere observe, and you insist that this is credible, and is justified on the ground that hereby the perfections of the Deity may be shown forth as they are not and as they could not be under the reign of law."

But why must we ask that this be believed? Who is responsible for the theory that redemption is not "within the sphere of law?" Christians as well as skeptics should recognize the everywhere proclaimed fact that law prevails.

If law be allowed its full demands, if it be in no

respect restricted or robbed of its due, how can any violator of law escape deserved penalty? The answer to this question is simply this: "*Grace reigns through righteousness.*" That is, *by the fulfilment of law*, by satisfying law in its demands for penalty and for obedience as well.

Beyond question, the most prevalent and plausible objection to revealed religion or to the doctrine of mercy through Christ is the objection which arises from the everywhere observed presence and prevalence of law. This objection, however, would have no force, would be absolutely irrelevant but for the assumption that mercy in its nature involves some interference with the prevalence and reign of law. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we come to a clear view of how it can be that law prevails undisturbed and serene everywhere in the universe, and yet provision ample and glorious for mercy also. The divine government is a government by law. Absolute justice characterizes the divine government. But the divine government is essentially a merciful as well as a just government. Governments, as instituted among men, are inadequate yet real types of the divine government in this respect; for there

is no government, there has been no government among men in which there was not constitutional and legal provision for mercy as well as for justice. This characteristic of government has been almost wholly overlooked or disregarded, if not openly denied. The reason for this is not far to seek. In the situation in which mankind has been, for the most part, in the centuries past, little more was expected or hoped for from civil government but the wholesome restraint of wrong-doing. Therefore men have fallen into the error of supposing that government exists mainly, if not solely, for the maintenance of justice.

A great point is gained when to anyone it becomes clear that the divine government is a government of law, and yet has provision ample and glorious for the exercise of mercy, and this on the part not only of every subject of law, every moral person, every government on earth or anywhere else, but on the part of him who is supreme. Let it be clearly seen that all government is required to be merciful as well as just. This is the law resting upon every subject of the divine law; but this is so only because he who is the Head and Source of all authority is himself a merciful Being,

and his government is essentially a merciful government. And let it not be thought that while he requires mercy on the part of individuals and of governments under him, and while he makes provision by which this which he requires, they may exemplify, he himself, by virtue of his being the Supreme, is debarred from showing mercy, or, if he show mercy, it must be in some peculiar, unique way, and unlike that in which others show mercy. Let it not be thought that *his own law* could in any sense be a barrier to his showing mercy to those needing mercy and under condemnation; for — though to him there is no law requiring mercifulness as there is to all others under him — his own perfection, from which law requiring mercy on the part of his creatures proceeds, is that which ensures that his government shall be pre-eminently merciful. It is every way credible that the Supreme Being, who, in eternity purposed to make this the most full and glorious self-manifestation, should have constituted the universe and should have ordained the *laws* by which it should be ordered and governed, with this his great end ever in view, and should have made all things in their order and in their place typical of this his utmost

work. The burden of proof lies on those that deny, not on those who affirm, in this case. The universe is a universe. It is one. It works to one end. The end toward which it is ever working is not less but more definite than that which any created being sets before him. We must not think that the myriads of admirable ends, intermediately and most beautifully accomplished, *could not* be reached without some special interference with the onward movement of all the working forces in the empire of mind and matter in exact accordance with invariable law; for the lesson of all that man observes is that all things work together for the accomplishment of the ends, all the glorious and admirable ends, which the Creator set before him from the foundation of the world.

How the free agency of myriads of creatures can be maintained inviolate, and not only the divinely purposed end be ever fully and exactly accomplished, but *each living being*, from the least to the greatest, *made to work in harmony with all others*, and with *all the forces of nature* directly *to that end*, we, of course, cannot hope to understand. And yet this, just this, we cannot but accept, unless we call in question the very existence of a Supreme *Ruler* of the universe.

CHAPTER II.

SATISFACTION OF LAW.

With many the very idea of mercy is that it consists in, or, in its very nature implies, a relaxation of law, a setting aside of its exact and full demands; and therefore atonement by the satisfaction of law they regard as inadmissible, contrary to justice and right. Accordingly they strenuously contend that whatever Christ did, he did not "satisfy divine justice," did not meet the penalty due to the sinner, did not satisfy the law in his behalf.

The radical fallacy underlying the opposition to the doctrine of atonement by the satisfaction of law, it will ever be found is a misconception of the very nature of mercy; imagining that in so far as mercy prevails justice must recede, law must yield.

So far from this being the case, there is, there can be no complete and true mercy except by the

complete and full satisfaction of law; and *no mercy at all* except by that which *tends to*, or *approximates* the satisfaction of law. There are none who need mercy — none to whom mercy can be shown — except such as are under condemnation of law. And the sole reason they need mercy is that they are under condemnation of law. The only mercy they need is deliverance from this condemnation. Anything that could be done for them short of such deliverance would be of no avail.

But how can deliverance from condemnation of law be obtained? Unquestionably, only by the satisfaction of law.

We thus come to the supreme question, how can law be satisfied in behalf of those under its condemnation? For the possibility of mercy to those under condemnation of law — the only ones needing mercy — is the possibility of the satisfaction of law in their behalf.

The mercy shown to sinners in Christ's great sacrifice in their behalf, is but the supreme and most glorious instance and exemplification of true mercy, even as mercy in its very nature must always and everywhere be exemplified; and that

which men imagine and laud and magnify as mercy, which confessedly falls short of this, or rather, which is held up as excellent because it is free from this distinguishing characteristic, *is not mercy at all.*

Let the character and estate of those who are objects of mercy be fully and carefully considered.

1. Assuredly they are not persons who have always been obedient to law. None such need mercy. It is impossible that any truly and fully obedient to law should receive any mercy. Mercy, then, is solely for *violators* of law.

2. They are objects of mercy *because* violators of law.

3. They are *sufferers* only because they are violators of law.

4. They are exposed to just penalty *in the future* because of their transgression.

5. This penalty of violated law is in its very nature without limit as to duration. Everywhere we are admonished that the results of violation of law are illimitable. Transgression having occurred, the future is thereby determined; so that *if nothing be done* the penalty remains forever.

In view of this, their estate, let us seriously con-

sider what is the mercy they need. Is it mere exemption from present pain? Is it the gratification of any or all the propensities of their nature? Is it the assurance that no farther penalty shall be inflicted? Is it the assurance that all possible good shall be supplied, — all possible to be given and enjoyed, short of that supreme good which flows from full satisfaction of law, and consequent justification or righteousness before the law? Manifestly not one, not all of these would constitute the mercy needed. What avail all that could be given *unto*, all that could be done *for*, one yet left under condemnation of law.

On the other hand, let it be observed that deliverance from condemnation, by means of full satisfaction of law, carries with it all conceivable good; for as all evil is brought down upon us by the condemnation of law, all blessing comes from being free from condemnation, righteous before the law.

Mercy consists in deliverance from condemnation of law. But let it ever be clearly seen that there is in the nature of the case but one only way of deliverance. God's mercy consisted, not in suspending or relaxing his law, but in providing for the full satisfaction of law in *behalf of*, and

at length *by*, his redeemed. But *we*, *also*, if we would show mercy, shall find no other way except as in this manner we imitate him who is most merciful. We are commanded to be "merciful *as* our Father in heaven is merciful." He who will show mercy to his fellow-man in any matter, even in forgiving the least debt, can do so in no other way.

In the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," and in many of the parables, as also in other parts of Scripture, it is assumed that there is a likeness between debt and sin. Indeed, if there had been anything better suited to set before our minds the real condition of the sinner, we cannot doubt that *it*, and not debt, would have been the emblem. In all ages and in all lands this emblem as set forth in the simple language of Scripture has been most cordially and joyfully accepted in its plain and evident meaning. Nothing has afforded greater satisfaction to sin-burdened and sorrowing ones. It is greatly to be regretted that some expounders of the Scripture have exhausted their strength and skill in striving to establish a difference between the emblem and that which it is used to illustrate.

Theologians who oppose the doctrine of Christ's substitution hasten to explain: "Sin is not like debt; the sinner cannot be delivered from the condemnation *he* is under, as can the debtor; no substitute can pay a ransom for him." Scripture, so far from asserting that sin is so unlike debt that no price, no ransom can procure deliverance, abounds with most explicit and abundant assurances that a "*price*," a "*ransom*," a "*redemption*," every way perfect has been provided, offered, and accepted. Nowhere does Scripture assert a contrast between *the way* by which a sinner and that by which a debtor is delivered. On the contrary, everywhere and with the utmost power of language, Scripture sets forth the likeness of the way of deliverance. Scripture does indeed assert and emphasize the immeasurable superiority of the ransom price.

The one way of deliverance from sin, as from debt, is the satisfaction of law. This satisfaction is required of the person himself, debtor or sinner. The sinner cannot, indeed, satisfy law; but this is not because of *anything in the nature of the law*. The sinner himself, like the debtor, is the *one* whose place it is to satisfy the law. The law looks

to *him first* of all. The obligation to satisfy the law rests first and wholly upon him, and would be forever upon him should no surety or substitute freely offer himself. But anyone able to do so may satisfy the law in behalf of the debtor. So also anyone fully able and willing may satisfy the law in behalf of the sinner, as well as of the debtor, and thus deliver from condemnation, and this without the slightest relaxation of the law. Everyone can see clearly that there is no relaxation when a surety satisfies the law in behalf of a debtor. But there is a prevalent notion that there *must* be relaxation when even the most competent surety satisfies law in behalf of the sinner. This is wholly due to a failure to estimate aright Christ's satisfaction. Its peculiar glory consisted in its meeting the original and full requirements, not of relaxed, but of unrelaxed, law.

Deliverance from debt is always and only by the satisfaction of the law. This is true not only when payment is made by the debtor himself; it is equally true when payment is made by anyone under law acting as a substitute for him; but it is true also when the debtor is delivered or released from his debt by the creditor himself. This is not

always so clearly seen. The creditor himself can no more deliver the debtor by mere expressions of sympathy and good-will than can any other friend or neighbor. Words are not charity. "Be ye warmed and clothed." A creditor must love not in word only. The one as well as the other must voluntarily consent to surrender so much of his own wealth as the note calls for. Charity which costs nothing is worth nothing. In the simplest act of forgiveness of debt there must be *full satisfaction* of the law; and a satisfaction, too, which is *by another* (than the debtor) assuming, taking upon himself, meeting and satisfying the legal obligation; and this by *suffering* (of course in his property) to the amount named in the note or bond. And let it be noticed that this is done not only in the interest of, for the good of, but in the place of, or as the substitute of, the debtor. So that the creditor who simply forgives a debt, in reality does an act which, under close examination and severe analysis, proves to be like the act of a benevolent surety, no one element being wanting in this case. Nothing but the prevalence of the absurd notion of forgiveness without satisfaction could justify more extended argument or illustration.

Two benevolent men of equal standing have their attention called to the estate of a poor debtor. They see plainly that he can be relieved in but one only way. Some one must, in his behalf, satisfy the legal obligation which is upon him. It is now discovered that to one of the two in question the debt is due,— they being equally able and equally willing to show mercy to the debtor. Is there one way open to the benevolent friend who should propose to be the surety or substitute, and quite another and easier and simpler way open before the one who is himself the creditor? It is clear as noonday that even the creditor himself cannot show mercy in this case, cannot forgive debt and release the debtor without doing *the very same thing* that the proposed surety or substitute must do to reach that result. The fact that in the one case there must be the actual forth-bringing of the required amount in money, and in the other case the mere consenting to forego or lose just that amount, cannot be allowed to obscure the real similarity of the two cases. For when all is over, when the debtor is actually delivered, whether by the surety or the creditor himself, it is evident that the one who befriended him or showed him mercy

voluntarily surrendered his own property to the amount required, that the law in the case might be satisfied.

For the same reason that a surety must satisfy fully the law in order to deliver a debtor, must the creditor himself; and anything done, everything that could possibly be done, whether by the surety or by the creditor, which should fall short of a full satisfaction of the law as above described, would fall short of the mercy required.

If the creditor be at the same time the law-giver, the administrator of the law, is he therefore debarred from acting for the deliverance of the debtor; or if he act must it be in a way different from that of any other in affecting like deliverance?

The chief magistrate, in any government on earth, emperor, president, governor, or king, if he would show mercy, if he would deliver the helpless debtor, must do this in a way not at all different from that of any surety, any creditor under his government. So far from being the one who may not in this way show mercy he is specially qualified and enabled to be foremost in this kind of beneficence. Mercy, the highest form of goodness,

befits monarchs. "Wouldst thou draw near the nature of the gods, draw near them then in being merciful."

I have, I trust, shown somewhat clearly (1) that the debtor — or the sinner — can be delivered only by the satisfaction of law; (2) that this deliverance may be by the debtor — or sinner — himself, if he be able to render such satisfaction; (3) it may be by any fellow-man acting as his substitute; (4) that this same satisfaction must be rendered by the creditor himself if he would show mercy; (5) and that this same satisfaction must be made even when the creditor is himself the chief magistrate. In every case the one only way is, the satisfaction of law.

With all reverence, yet with all confidence, I now proceed to say that the Supreme Law-giver, Judge and King himself showeth mercy in this very way, this one only way. The reason lies in the very nature of the case. The universe is so constituted and governed that bliss can be reached by any subject of the divine government only when brought into full harmony with law. Manifestly this can be reached, in the case of violators of law only by satisfaction. With reverence we

may venture to say that God himself could not show mercy to any violator of his law otherwise than by providing first of all for the satisfaction of violated law and at the same time providing for complete restoration to obedience. But both these constitute nothing else, nothing more than the true and proper satisfaction of law. "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."[1] These two parts of Christ's great redemptive work must not be thought to be separate or separable. To imagine that we might have been saved, might have reached perfect bliss in some other way than by the perfect satisfaction of law *for* us, and at length *by* us, is not a whit less absurd than to imagine that by some device of ours the great law of gravitation might be escaped. To imagine bliss conferred upon any moral being, a violator of law, otherwise than by making him every way conformable to law, is to imagine what is simply absurd. Satisfaction full and complete *for* the sinner; satisfaction full and complete *by* the sinner, — both these are essential. Only thus could God himself save us. Saved thus, the law instead

[1] I. John I. : 9.

of being relaxed, dispensed with, or in any respect robbed of its due, is "magnified and made honorable."

It is ever and with great confidence asserted by "the advanced thinkers" in the theological world, that forgiveness as taught by the evangelical, that is forgiveness on the grounds of substitution, ransom price, or by the satisfaction of law, is a "legal fiction," a "pure figment," "contrary to the principles of justice," an "outrage upon the moral sense implanted in man," a "travesty upon justice," a "mockery of the law."

We must charitably assume that those advanced thinkers who so confidently and in the strongest terms, denounce the doctrine of forgiveness held by the evangelical church in all ages, have not carefully and closely studied the common instances and examples of mercy or forgiveness among *men*, have not carefully analyzed that simple and familiar emblem — the forgiveness of debt — whereby *more than by any other* our Lord himself has, in the brief form of prayer, as also in his parables, taught us the true nature of mercy or forgiveness, whether by man or by our Father in heaven. For surely if they had given to the study of this subject

those noble powers and that "independent judgment" — whereof they are abidingly conscious, and for which they are boundlessly thankful — they would have seen that God in the order and course of his providence, and by the laws which determine absolutely how these ends may, nay must, be reached, has left to the merciful *man* no other way by which he may show mercy to his fellow-man, even in so small a matter as the forgiveness of a legal debt — and there is no real debt that is not legal — but by the satisfaction of law in behalf of, instead of, and as the substitute of, the debtor, no other way even for the creditor himself. No other way for the one who is at the same time the creditor and law-giver or administrator of the law.

Mercy consists in satisfaction of law. Nothing is mercy, true and proper, but that which gives deliverance from condemnation of law. If any should object to this, affirming that mercy consists in doing good in *any way* to sufferers, I reply (1) there *are no* sufferers except those who are under condemnation as violators of law; and (2) that *no* real and *enduring good* can be done to them short of complete deliverance from impending penalty,

and restoration to righteousness, or conformity to law. Both of these are, in strictness of language, simple and mere satisfaction of law. And nothing is mercy, true and proper, except *as*, and in *so far as*, it approximates to such satisfaction.

This I have already endeavored to prove and illustrate by the direct consideration of actual instances and examples of mercy, whether by finite beings or by the One Infinite Being who is most merciful and who has given the one *supreme example of mercy*, of which every merciful act, even by the least and weakest of his creatures, is, in its nature and necessarily, a real though an infinitesimal pattern and type.

We come now to consider how the condemned, the suffering, the unrighteous, require or need only these two things: (1) reinstatement in righteousness before the law; or, the complete removal of all condemnation, all liability to punishment for past offences; (2) conformity of heart and life to the precepts, the full requirements of the divine law. But both of these are obtained only by the satisfaction of law. Rather, both of these are *required to constitute* the satisfaction of law, the only satisfaction possible. For the law requires of the

guilty not only the payment of the penalty, but perfect conformity to the precept, and law is not, and cannot be, in any true and proper sense, satisfied until it obtains both of these.

Let it not be thought that there is the least impropriety in calling *all* that is done *for* the redeemed by Christ the Saviour — whatever else it may be — a true and proper satisfaction of law in their behalf. This is true, this is equally true, of that which Christ does by his vicarious sufferings in paying the penalty for their transgressions; and that which he does by his grace in the hearts of his redeemed in their sanctification. To him belongs the glory of both these parts of the great satisfaction of law wherein all mercy consists. For since the actual conformity of the heart and life of believers to the law of God by means of the grace of Christ sanctifying them, is owing to the atonement made *by* Christ, and owing to the grace *of* Christ, it is not separated from Christ's satisfaction which he renders to the law in their behalf. While it is to Christ that we owe both the parts of that complete satisfaction of the law wherein consists the entireness of God's mercy to us, let it be observed that Christ effects neither of these except by the concurrent act of the saved.

The sacrificial atonement of Christ, gloriously complete and perfect as it is in itself, is never "for us" except as by divine grace, it is actively appropriated. But for this it could not be called a satisfaction of the law in our behalf; for what the law demands, it demands of us. If that which is rendered be not in any true and proper sense from us, whatever it be, it cannot be a satisfaction for us. Overlooking the fact that Christ's glorious and every way perfect obedience includes in itself as a constituent element of it, the obedience of all united to him, and that it is for this reason a true and proper satisfaction, heretics amuse themselves with, and are never weary of exposing the absurdity of, the notion that one person should "believe," "love," or "obey" for another.

Christ's satisfaction of the law, when it demanded payment of penalty as well as when it demanded obedience to the precept, includes what he does in his own person, and also what and all that he does by his grace and by his spirit *in* and *for* and *by* the saved, even from the first act of obedience — believing on his name — on and on throughout the progressive work of sanctification till they are fully conformed to the law of God.

Thus only is the law satisfied. Nothing short of this would be a true satisfaction.*

Whatsoever the merciful or the Most Merciful might do, if it should fall short of just such satisfaction, would be of no avail, no real enduring benefit to those under condemnation. Anything and everything conceivable that could be done for one who needs mercy,—except that the penalty he owes to the law remains unsatisfied, and except that he is not in heart and life conformable to the law's requirements, who could fail to see that his case is in no way improved? The excellence of the things furnished or offered him, instead of affording the least alleviation of his miseries, only aggravates them. He who is dying of hunger is not comforted, or in any sense relieved, or momentarily benefited, by the offer of gold or pearls. Whoso needeth mercy at all needeth it because he is under condemnation of law, and

* As Christ's sacrificial death availed for the saints of the old dispensation because the covenant engagement made it as though it were already offered, even so the perfect obedience of each of the saved — since they are now united to Christ — being equally and on the same ground assured, is as though it were already rendered. So that this perfect obedience, considered in its true relation to the work and the grace of Christ, is a true and essential part of the great satisfaction.

because he is out of harmony with law. The mercy, therefore, which he needs is nothing other than the satisfaction of the law. The only source of all his misery, as well as of all danger, is that there remains against him unsatisfied demands of the law. Law irrepealable and inexorable asks ever just this satisfaction.

But this which law demands, conscience also, and with like imperativeness demands. For this every awakened conscience cries. For him who needeth mercy there is no hope save this: the satisfaction of law. For him the best that the universe contains hath no charm. To him all good must come *after*, not before the satisfaction of law. With all reverence we may say God himself could not make blessed any one against whom his own law hath unsatisfied demands. God himself can give to those who need mercy no real good but that which consists in providing for and insuring the full satisfaction of the law *for* them and *by* them. Therefore he holds out no hope or promise of good other than this. This one great good is the condition of the enjoyment of any other. Under condemnation as violators of law, unable to render obedience to the precepts of the law, the

sole hope is that *in some way* satisfaction may be made, and *in some way* ability may be given to fulfill perfectly the law in time to come. If these can be then — hope. If these cannot be then — despair — "outer darkness" — "as darkness itself" — "neither sun nor stars" — but night on which "darkness hath seized" forevermore — "the blackness of darkness forever and ever."

While all else is of no avail, to do this is to do all that is needed, all that is possible to be done for him. To do anything else for him is to do nothing. To do this is to do everything. Let him who thinks otherwise try to imagine something added to this complete satisfaction of law, something that will make his present estate better, or his future more bright. Surely none can fail to see at length that no being can possibly come into any blessedness beyond that which flows from perfect conformity to the divine law. God who looked with infinite pity looked also with infinite wisdom upon mankind. He proposed no other good for man than this, restoration to perfect conformity to law. This restoration by the one only way — the satisfaction of law. This is God's mercy. This is the entireness of God's mercy.

This is mercy to the uttermost. This puts man in possession of all that his nature can demand or enjoy. Satisfaction of law ensured, all is ensured. Free from condemnation and enabled to render perfect obedience to law, he has not only the right unto, but has in possession all conceivable good. He needs nothing more. He has already all there is for any subject of law. He has all the mercy that can be asked or imagined; all the mercy God himself can give. God's mercy is just this, the righteousness of Christ by which the law is satisfied, magnified and made honorable; the righteousness of the saved, who in God's own time and way are by his grace made conformable to his holy law. Anything short of this, whatever men may imagine, is not mercy at all. This is mercy which leaves nothing beyond to be enjoyed or imagined. This is the mercy which the saved accept with unspeakable joy. It is to them "*all their salvation and all their desire*." In this mercy redeemed souls *rest* with supreme delight. And no soul of man in this world has ever "*found rest*," ever can find rest in anything that falls short of this. Short of this there is no beginning of mercy; no beginning of peace; for conscience is satisfied only *as* and only *because* law is satisfied.

CHAPTER III.

MERCY AND JUSTICE.

God in showing mercy to man did not do so at the expense of justice; rather in that great transaction by which his mercy is most gloriously displayed, he also revealed, even more fully than in any other of his works or his ways, the measure, the extent, the infinitude of his justice. The work of Christ — which work, as all the evangelical confess, consisted mainly in his sacrificial suffering, even his "obedience unto death"[1] — while it was the supreme manifestation of divine mercy, was also the supreme, the utmost manifestation of the infinitude of the justice of God. It was the most glorious "*fiat justitia*" that the universe had ever heard. No one of the attributes of God can be exercised in any way which interferes with the glorious and full exercise of any other attribute.

[1] Phil. II.: 8.

Whatever may or may not be, justice must be satisfied. There can be no mercy by any kind of weakening or resiling of justice. And because of this, it was necessary that Christ should come and should do and suffer in fulfilment of the law.

But if God in showing mercy ceases not to show himself to be a just God, let it not be thought incredible that he in inflicting just punishment upon the guilty should show himself to be in his character a most merciful being. If the attribute of justice is not hidden from view in Christ's redemptive work, if it is made to shine out from the cross, to shine out from the cross more gloriously and affectingly than anywhere else in the universe, let it be considered that justice as inflicted upon the impenitent, does not hide from view the infinitude of the mercy of God, does not conceal from view the real character of God. The ground of the condemnation of the lost is that they rejected offered mercy. Their sin was not merely against a God of justice; it was against the God who *is*, and who proclaims himself in his word, and in the whole course of his providence, most merciful.

Most of the heresies which have vexed the church of Christ in all the ages have arisen from

man's puerile conceit regarding the very nature of mercy,— the notion that justice must be in some sense relaxed if mercy be shown. It is not at all difficult to see how this one baneful fallacy prevails and survives age after age, even after the most valiant and vehement denunciations of the orthodox. No amount of teaching, no array of Scripture, no chain of reasoning, can wholly root out or abate a heresy which is indigenous, which has its roots so deeply imbedded in a soil so well suited to give it vigorous growth. "From justice all danger"; therefore, if justice could but be held back, or could be in any way weakened or relaxed, it is thought that man's case would be by so much improved. The supreme question is, indeed, the question of deliverance from the stroke of justice. But why will men dream of any other way of deliverance except that which is so fully declared in Scripture, and so variously and fully symbolized and illustrated in the whole course of providence — the satisfaction of law? The mercy of God is the declaration of his righteousness. His righteousness shines forth more fully in this than in any other way.

If there is a peculiar and amazing exhibition

and exemplification of justice in that great transaction by which mercy was provided for man, an exhibition and exemplification which conveys a lesson that could in no other way be so solemnly and mightily impressed upon the minds of all, let it not be thought incredible that there should be, correspondingly, a most marvelous showing forth of the real, the infinite mercifulness of God's character, even in the dire judgments poured out upon the impenitent of our race. The underlying truth which makes this view not only credible and rational, but the *only* credible and rational view, is that any being, great or small, finite or infinite, acts always in accordance with his whole nature or character, so that all that he is is truly impressed upon and signified by *every work* which proceeds from him. The individual mind, that is the actor, the person, is a unit, and every work which proceeds from the person is the work not of a part but of the entire unit.* Of course it is not meant that man, or any, even the highest created

* The distinction so carelessly made between hand-work and brain-work — as if brain-work were peculiar to "the professors," or to "literateurs," and not at all, or at least in a very subordinate sense, shared in by artisans — is a distinction that is not merely without foundation, it involves a gross error. The

intelligences, in time or in eternity, could so thoroughly study and so fully interpret any one of the works of the Creator — or of any worker — as to derive from it alone a full view of the real nature, character and perfections of the worker who left upon it the impress of his own real character. But it *is* meant that man may so study the works and ways of God — especially as these are interpreted by the bright light of his own word,

philosopher, the author, the scientist, and even the orator, must do good brain-work; but even so must the carpenter or the blacksmith. Every stroke by which the iron is shaped or fashioned on the anvil will be a true, a wise, a successful stroke only as in the brain of the blacksmith there be *good brain-work*. The whole man acts; and as the man is, so is his work; and this, though there be many who see neither the man nor his work, so as to interpret the one or the other.

From time to time there appears a crank, a "genius," or a prodigy who boldly gives out that *he* can tell the character of any one, if you will but show him a specimen of his (or her) handwriting, or even if you show him an old shoe worn by the friend whose character *you* would be pleased to have *him* "read." Now we who claim to be wise, while we are thankful that we are not like this poor mountebank, should show that we *are* really wise; we should be willing to learn even from fools. Seriously, what is the "proton pseudos" in the pretensions of the charlatan, "the mind reader"? Is it that character is indicated by the actions and doings of mortals? No: it is that *he* is the *one* who, *above his sane fellow mortals*, can so interpret the traces of the pen, or even the treadings of the feet, as from these alone *he* can tell *you* what sort of person traced with the hand, or trod with the feet.

and the brighter light of his own marvelous and saving grace — that he shall have the *fullest assurance* that the real and the whole character, and the gloriously perfect harmony of the divine attributes, even all of them, *are* indelibly impressed upon and shine forth in all his works.* For who will dare to say that God is the one only worker who sends forth from his hand works which either bear no mark, or bear an imperfect mark or sign of the source from which they proceed. "The heavens declare his glory," but this the heavens do only because everything that goes to constitute the heavens, even all his works, praise him.

If among men the highest, purest, and noblest of all, the supreme judge of a great commonwealth, is never regarded as lacking in the tenderest and kindest feelings of humanity, by reason that it is his duty to pronounce sentence of condemnation upon the culprit who has attempted the destruction of the state, why should it be thought that the one Law-giver and Judge, who *is* supreme in the universe in a higher sense than is any

* *There is no creature so small and abject that it representeth not the goodness of God.*— THOMAS À KEMPIS.

supreme in the commonwealth, even in his most fearful sentence against those who sought the ruin of all, should do this otherwise than in the full and harmonious activity of all his glorious attributes and perfections? Indeed, all right-thinking persons read in the finely marked features and hear in the rich and tender undertones of the venerable and just judge who is pronouncing sentence upon the culprit, the fulness and flood-tide of mercy and compassion wherewith he is manifestly even then surcharged. And shall it be thought incredible that in him of whom the highest and purest judge on earth is but a faint type or pattern, there should be like characteristics, like intimations of goodness, kindness or tenderness; and this, when all through the Bible run the most solemn assertions and assurances of just this divine tenderness and compassion. "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth."[1] "Not willing that any should perish."[2] "The wrath of the Lamb."[3]

Indeed, unless we so regard the character of God, even in this condemnation of the impenitent, we reduce the pathetic cry of Jesus, when on Mt. Olivet he wept over Jerusalem, to a mere betrayal

[1] Ezekiel xxxiii. : 11. [2] II. Pet. iii. : 9. [3] Rev. vi. : 16.

of human sympathy, not to say human weakness; whereas in it we should discern the infinitude, the boundlessness of divine pity and compassion.

Many without question assume that to be merciful is simply to refrain from inflicting deserved penalty, simply to surrender the claims of justice. If this be true, surely it follows that to be *most merciful* must be to refrain from executing the sentence of justice *in any case*.

Multitudes conscious of the length to which this idea of mercy logically carries them, seek to find a way of escape. "It would not *do* to show mercy to all. Something is due to justice." So it is imagined that a compromise must be made. Indeed without being conscious of the dishonor — almost amounting to blasphemy — which this view casts upon the Supreme Being, they assume that he, like some of the tyrant conquerors of the barbaric ages, "measures with a line to destroy and to save alive."

In all candor, what else is their view? "Mercy is just letting off so many culprits by merely refraining from executing the sentence of justice." But since, manifestly, it would not do to let off all culprits, some must be dealt with on the grounds

of justice and others on the grounds of mercy. And in this way the claims of justice are to be maintained! In this way the character of the Supreme Ruler as a merciful and a just Being is to be vindicated; just and merciful; that is, just in dealing with some, merciful in dealing with others!

"Mercy consists in letting the sinner escape justice." But mercy is most praiseworthy; therefore since God is most merciful, he will not in the end execute the sentence of justice on any. If he seem to inflict penalty, it is but seeming. For all that to us seems penalty "is simply remedial."

"Law does not require penalty."* Between this and the high ground occupied by the orthodox in all ages, there is no resting-place. No compromise is possible. The restorationists are logical; so also are the "most straightest sect" of the evangelical. All others are in mid-air.

If mercy be the invasion of the province of justice, if such mercy be praiseworthy, the conclusion is unavoidable: mercy must not merely

* "Atonement and Law Reviewed" (page 234), by S. G. Burney, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Systematic Theology, Cumberland University, Nashville, Tenn.

invade, it must prevail and triumph everywhere. To this conclusion bold and vigorous minds have been led, even from the very early ages of the Christian era down to our own times. It could not be otherwise. The new theology is unscriptural and unphilosophical; moreover, its trend is always in the direction of universalism, as every one who has carefully observed cannot but know. It would result in universalism were its advocates only a little more courageous and logical. They are all facing towards that goal; but only the intrepid, those who can make vast and rapid strides, reach it in a lifetime. Most new theologians die while the goal is yet in the dim distance before them, die praising their God that, if not altogether as good as he might have been, certainly he is good far beyond what the followers of Augustine and of Calvin, and the evangelical generally, imagine him to be; much more merciful than the orthodox generally admit.*

Not thus is character in any case to be vindicated. The condemnation of one sinner, if vin-

* Witness the gratuitous plea for God: that "after all, not many of mankind will be lost"; witness the cool and confident answer to the question which Jesus refused to answer: "Are there few that be saved?"

dicated at all, must be vindicated on its own grounds. Mercy to ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, mercy to every other violator of law in the universe, would not weigh so much as a feather's weight in vindication of an act which was not in itself its own vindication. God measures with no line, long or short, "to save alive and to kill." If his whole character be not set forth and gloriously vindicated in the sum total of his dealings with *everyone* with whom he deals, in vain shall any one go in search of testimonials, or in any way undertake to "plead for God." Indeed the most advanced thinker — I mean the new theologian — would never volunteer to be in any such manner the vindicator of God, but for the fact that he fails to see in its true light how Mercy and Justice harmonize, and are gloriously displayed and "*declared*" and vindicated in the redemptive work of Christ. He thinks that mercy can never shine brightly unless justice be in some respects eclipsed. He thinks justice can never be maintained except by a judge who, for the time ceases to be, or at least ceases to show himself to be, merciful. He gets no clear view of the "declared" "righteousness of God." He

grasps not the true meaning of the words, "just and the justifier of him that believeth."[1] Those who really believe that God is infinitely merciful, so long as they imagine mercy to be the mere setting aside of justice, cannot stop short of the conclusion that all shall in the end be saved. The scriptural and evangelical doctrine of mercy is mercy which not only invades not, overshadows not, but which gloriously displays or declares the justice, the righteousness of God. For, as in his great act of mercy his righteousness is declared, so in his most awful sentence of justice his mercifulness is that which is above all things most brightly and gloriously revealed and declared, so that none can fail to see it now and even to all eternity. Mercy at the expense of justice is a pure fiction of the human brain. He who would show mercy at all, man who would show mercy to his fellow-man can do so only by declaring his righteousness; for mercy consists in making righteous (those who were unrighteous). To do aught else for them would be short of mercy. This is what they need, all they need. He who will make them righteous — that is reinstate them so that

[1] Rom. III. : 26.

there is no condemnation of law against them, renew and change them so that they are every way fully conformed to law — does thereby confer upon them all the mercy it is possible they could have. He leaves nothing to be added. He who does this can boldly exclaim, "*It is finished.*"[1]

By the discussion thus far, we are led to the following conclusions: —

1. The only persons who need mercy are the unrighteous.

2. The only mercy they need is deliverance from the evils which arise from unrighteousness.

3. But deliverance from these can be secured only by becoming righteous.

4. But to become righteous is to satisfy all the claims and demands of justice or of law.

5. The claims and demands of justice or of law are undeniably these: (1) satisfaction for all past offences; (2) conformity to all the precepts.

6. But satisfaction for all past offences can be made only by the payment of the full penalty annexed to the violations or offences.

7. And conformity to the precepts or requirements of the law is nothing short of true and per-

[1] John xix.: 30.

fect righteousness of character; that is, of the heart, wherefrom alone true and perfect obedience can spring.

8. But satisfaction for past offences and conformity to the precept is obviously in the nature of the case, and quite obviously also in all human experience, an utter impossibility in the case of the violator of law — and of conscience also — who is in heart and life unrighteous.

9. So, then, true and perfect mercy can consist in nothing less than, nothing short of, the satisfaction of law in its demand of penalty for all past offences, and restoration to righteousness or ability to render obedience, which satisfaction and restoration must be the act and work *of another* FOR the unrighteous, though never *against*, or even *without* the concurrent will and act OF him who is thus saved.

10. The satisfaction and restoration must be by one who not only acts in the interest of, and for the good of, another, but in his stead and *as his substitute*.

11. Perfect mercy in every case is perfect satisfaction and perfect restoration. Whatever falls short of this, since it leaves the violator of law

under the same condemnation, is not the mercy needed.

12. No merely human, no created, or merely finite, being can, in behalf of any violator of law, render complete and full satisfaction, or work in another — a violator of law — a complete restoration of heart and life, so as to afford the mercy which every one, who needs mercy at all, manifestly requires.

13. The Scripture not in single texts but throughout, in its typology, its poetry, its prophecy, and in the Apocalypse sets it forth as the glory of Christ that he did that *which no other could have done*. In doing this he gave to the universe the one supreme, inapproachable example and instance of virtue, goodness, love. For doing this he receives and shall receive in the eternal ages the rapturous praises of the universe.

14. Yet any, even the least and weakest, moral being, since made in the image of God, can do for another acts of mercy which are in themselves and in their aim and tendency identical with that mercy which God in Christ affords to sinners.

CHAPTER IV.

FORGIVENESS WITHOUT SATISFACTION.

Those who strenuously contend against the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin on the ground of Christ's satisfaction, those who persistently deny that what Christ did was in any true and proper sense a satisfaction of the law, do so on the assumption that forgiveness as exemplified among men either in the case of private individuals or in the case of those who are administrators of the law, is, or may be, forgiveness in which no regard whatever is paid to the question of the satisfaction of the law, in that particular matter with respect to which the act of forgiveness is concerned.

But careful scrutiny and discrimination must lead to the clear perception that forgiveness as exemplified among men is seldom without manifest and avowed regard to, or without being really based upon, some kind of provision for the satis-

faction of the law; and that in those cases in which forgiveness is granted in disregard of the satisfaction of law, it is forgiveness which is reprobated and unhesitatingly condemned by the universal conscience; and that it is also a forgiveness which, so far from being a real benefit and blessing or mercy to the one forgiven, but damages his standing and endangers his future. And besides this it is forgiveness which is prejudicial to the real interests of the community or the commonwealth. It not only meets with disapprobation as that which it is not fit or right should be, but it is felt and resented by the public as an evil and a menace to society.

That these positions are abundantly sustained by the deliberate verdict of mankind in all human history, even a little consideration will make plain.

Elsewhere I have shown at length (as I trust to the satisfaction of every candid mind) that in forgiveness of debt, a legal debt — and there is no debt that is not legal — there is always and necessarily provision made for the full satisfaction of the law in that matter, and that this satisfaction of the law is none the less complete and direct when it is the creditor himself who forgives.

I desire now, however, to set forth clearly and fully how in all cases of forgiveness — except those unwarranted and unreasoning and wanton acts of forgiveness which are met with universal reprobation by the common conscience of the community — even when the one who forgives is at one and the same time the creditor and the administrator of law or the governing power, there is manifest regard to the satisfaction of law.

Debtors until within recent years were in all nations regarded and treated as culpable, were liable to imprisonment. And even yet, in all lands debtors are regarded in the same light; for though imprisonment for debt has been abolished, on account of the fearful hardships it often involved, no government fails to enact laws with the design of bringing debtors to the bar of the law, and preventing them from defrauding their creditors. The fact that the laws have been changed, that the penalties are not the same, in no respect interferes with the other fact that the laws of all lands, now as ever, regard debtors as amenable to the law.

But how does the law deal with debtors? When and how are debtors wont to be delivered

(whether from prison or from whatever obligation or restriction they are under by the sentence of the law as debtors)? The answer is: Only when in some way provision has been made for the satisfaction of the law, either by the debtor or by a surety, or by the creditor himself. Now, if the debtor himself satisfy the law, his deliverance is not an act of forgiveness at all. But if *any other one*, a friend, a surety, or the creditor himself, consent to satisfy the law, then the deliverance or release of the debtor is forgiveness true and proper.

If it be said that the administrator of the law when he releases a debtor on the ground that a surety or that the creditor himself consents to satisfy the law in that matter — and in either case the satisfaction is necessarily (1) by suffering loss, or parting with so much property; (2) this, in behalf of, and instead of, and as the substitute of, the debtor — does not grant forgiveness at all, but simply does an act of justice. I reply, this is undeniably the true view of the case. All is due in such case to the surety or the creditor — all is due to the one, be he who he may, who rendered to the law its full demand; the one who made the full satisfaction is the one who shows mercy.

Here let it be observed that the ground on which the release and the complete deliverance of the redeemed, according to the evangelical faith, is called an act of forgiveness, is that the satisfaction was *provided* and *furnished by* the *Supreme Law-giver himself*, who, though he is above all, is not on that account debarred from this one kind of beneficence from which, by all confession, no subject of law is at all debarred. It is manifestly because this is not clearly seen that there is the unreasoning and persistent clamor against the evangelical doctrine of forgiveness.

So then forgiveness, or the release and deliverance of debtors from whatever restraints or penalties law lays upon them (whether imprisonment, or forbidding their fleeing the country, or their giving bonds, etc.,) is always forgiveness, or release, or deliverance, because in some way provision has been made for the satisfaction of the law.

Forgiveness or release of debtors on any other ground, or without provision made in some way for the satisfaction of the law, would be reprobated and condemned by every one as wanton and unwarrantable, and even illegal.

Imagine a most merciful magistrate or ruler who, out of his mere compassion, should rule and determine that all debtors should go free? He, forsooth, because he is merciful (?) will, out of tender compassion, release or forgive all debtors. He is not merciful at all. He is incapable of showing mercy; for he knows not wherein mercy consists. And his act, so far from being an act of mercy, is one of gross and manifest injustice. It is not mercy even *to the debtor*. For when it is past, he is still a debtor. The unsatisfied law yet condemns him, as does also his own conscience, as well as the conscience of every other of his fellow-men. The law is not honored.

But it may be thought that in other cases of criminals under sentence of the law, there need be no like provision for the satisfaction of law; or that forgiveness may, in some instances, be made, and properly made, with absolutely no regard whatever to the matter of the satisfaction of law.

This is wholly a mistake. Carefully considered, in every case of forgiveness by the administrator of law (king, president, or governor,) there is regard had to the satisfaction of the law. I admit that the *ways* in which satisfaction is made, and

the *kinds* of satisfaction which are *judged sufficient*, are such as would not always bear close and exact scrutiny; *i.e.*, these ways and these kinds of satisfaction may bear the marks of human imperfection. But imperfect as they may be, they nevertheless stand as witnesses for the *principle* that satisfaction is required in every case of true and proper forgiveness. Let it be observed that the ways and kinds of satisfaction may be very various, and often only approximate, and the forgiveness which is granted in view of these — confessedly inadequate satisfactions, or provisions for satisfaction, often a fond hope merely — may be forgiveness which is hopefully interpreted and commended by the community.

Consent to analyze one or two cases in illustration of these positions. A minor, a lad it may be, of good parentage, is apprehended, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to imprisonment for a term of years. After a few months of his imprisonment a movement is made for his release. The ruler is appealed to to grant a pardon. Now, on what grounds? What pleas do they make who are bestirring themselves with the view of securing the pardon? Do they give no consideration to the

matter of the proper satisfaction of the law in that case? Consider closely what they do; what pleas they bring; on what grounds they rest their hopes of securing the forgiveness, the pardon. In all candor they do nothing; they make no plea; they cherish no hope that is not based upon their ability to show *in some way* that there is already such provision for, or assurance of, or hope of, satisfaction of law, as will render it admissible that release be granted. It will be urged that already the condemned one has suffered or paid the penalty. And why so? The penalty was five years, and the lad has served scarcely five months. But it will be said, he is not a base wretch, and considering his parentage and his standing, the little time he has been imprisoned has been as great a suffering as would five years for a stolid and base-born son of some thieving tribe.

Without pursuing in detail all those familiar pleas and considerations which are set forth, and which "have weight" with the pardoning power and with the community, it is enough to say that these are all reducible to three classes: (1) Such as go to show that in this case the literal penalty was too severe. (2) Such as go to show how

the truly deserved penalty has already been met. (3) That reasonable assurance is *now* afforded that what the law seeks and demands will be granted. In short, under honest, careful, and strict analysis, all that was done, all that is pleaded, all that is relied on to induce pardon or release, is on the ground that sufficient satisfaction, or guarantee of satisfaction, has been given to warrant the release of the condemned.

Let it not be thought that the manifestly inadequate or merely approximate payment of penalty, and the bare presumption or hope of conformity to the law in time to come, on the grounds of which man forgives his fellow-man, creates the least presumption that a like provision or partial or probable satisfaction of law may or can prevail when the question is of true and perfect forgiveness granted by the Lord himself; for *he* can grant forgiveness in no case except where forgiveness ought to be granted. This no one will claim is true of any, even the wisest and best of human rulers. While man must act upon probabilities, and must accept what is manifestly not a full and exact satisfaction, or rather, while man cannot assume to know in every case what *is* a true, proper, and full satisfac-

tion, it must be remembered that with God there can be neither of these.

But what deserves attention is that man, in his whole conduct, in dealing with this matter, clearly indicates that true and proper and full satisfaction of law is required. And his acceptance of that which is only the presumption of satisfaction for the past offence; and his acceptance also of that which is the mere promise or presumptive guarantee of conformity in time to come, must not be interpreted as giving sanction to the principle that anything can be called or "regarded" as a satisfaction that is not in the strictest sense a satisfaction, true, proper, and gloriously perfect and complete; or to the principle that a fallible promise or guarantee of conformity to law can be accepted by God as a ground of release or pardon or forgiveness. For by man, by human rulers, pardon is granted on the presumption that the penalty has been sufficient, and on the ground that the guarantee of obedience in time to come is sufficient, so that forgiveness granted on this ground is rather an argument to prove that true and proper forgiveness must be only when true and proper and full satisfaction has been assured — both by payment of

the full penalty, and guarantee and more than guarantee of obedience, even the perfecting "forever by one offering." Man insists upon full satisfaction, sees the propriety of it, grants pardon on the ground of it, only he confessedly is not able in every case either to decide what *is* a true and proper satisfaction, and quite as plainly is he unable to say when such satisfaction has been rendered. But observe: In all cases in which the satisfaction demanded is definite and clearly within man's ken, it is rigidly insisted on — as in the case of debt or fine payable in money.

Some Trivial Objections Considered.

I am aware that there are grown persons, able-bodied persons, presumably sane persons, who when confronted with what to them seems a rash and unwarranted assertion that all forgiveness, all mercy in its very nature involves and requires provision for the satisfaction of law, will descend to the murky atmosphere of that kind of forgiveness which one man asks and another gets from his neighbor when any little offence or injury is received or inflicted, thus: a man insults me, and I not only do not resent it, but I forgive him; or,

a man slanders me, and I forgive him. Where is there any satisfaction of law in these and like cases of forgiveness?

To argue gravely against objections of this kind requires more grace than for almost any other Christian duty. "Two mites which make a farthing"— a farthing, then, pays a debt, satisfies a note or bond, always and perfectly — provided the note or bond call for no more than "two mites which make a farthing." In that case there is the full and perfect satisfaction of the law, followed by reinstatement and all the blessed results of deliverance from debt and from the condemnation of the law — and of conscience as well — which debt — and this wholly irrespective of its amount — always involves.

If your companion inflict some slight injury — out of carelessness — which is culpable and forbidden by the law, certainly by the divine law — and hasten to say, "I beg pardon," and you on your part, as in duty bound, hasten to reply, granting pardon. Yes, with a pleasant smile, even while the anguish from the injury you have received extends from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head, you, because you are good and of a

forgiving spirit, blandly, and in the kindest terms, grant the pardon sought. "Lo, here have we not full, free, unconditional pardon, direct forgiveness, and no thought of, or regard to, or provision for, satisfaction of law?" "Triumphantly (have we not?) established the doctrine of forgiveness without satisfaction of law?" (They compel us to argue and contend for this inch of ground — they trifle — they throw dust. Shall we follow them this once?)

My dear forgiving friend, consent to be a philosopher for the occasion. Consider and analyze the least and most trifling case in which one rational — I mean human — being says "I beg" and another replies "I grant" pardon.

He who begs is always presumed to have already *suffered* at least the full penalty of his transgression. Assuredly if it could be shown — if it were but suspected — that he had suffered nothing, or had suffered very little, in his mind, in his feelings — not to say in his conscience — on account of his transgression; if it were made clear as daylight that he had suffered nothing whatever, surely no sane one would reply "I grant pardon." Rather, surely even *he* would not have the hardihood to say "I beg pardon."

Seriously, pardon, even in such cases, is asked and granted on the presumption that the full penalty of the offence has been endured. Indeed it would not be difficult to maintain that penalty over and above the strict requirement of law and of conscience had actually been suffered by the high-minded and kind-hearted friend who had inflicted even so slight an injury upon his fellow-man. And as for the assurance or guarantee of conformity to the high and universal and most just and admirable law — forbidding even such trifling injury — this is presumed to be every way perfect, complete and satisfactory. For how preposterous, how meaningless, how impertinent, would be the words "I beg" or the response "I grant," on any other supposition or presumption than that there was an honest and downright purpose and endeavor — amounting to a satisfactory promise, pledge or guarantee — that in time to come this kind of offence should be scrupulously avoided.

In all candor and in all seriousness, then, I maintain that in those instances which are so flippantly adduced, such as, "If a man insult me and I forgive him, what satisfaction of law is there in the matter?" "If a man inflict injury, if he slander

me, if he strike me, and I forgive him, how can it be shown that any regard is had in such cases to the satisfaction of the law?" There is always the presumption confidently made and constantly regarded on all hands, that there is in good faith satisfaction of law, both in its demand of proper and full penalty and in its demand of conformity, or pledge and assurance and guarantee of conformity in time to come. And never would anyone in his right mind grant pardon or forgiveness for the least offence, insult, or injury, unless on such presumption and such assurance or guarantee. For consider, who would pardon an insult, an offence, an injury, even the slightest, if the one guilty should say, "I am not at all sorry for what I have done. I have suffered nothing in my mind on account of the insult, injury, or offence; and farther, I shall in no respect consider myself as bound to avoid the like in time to come"? Who cannot see that it is because the very opposite of this is, on sufficient grounds, believed and assumed that pardon or forgiveness in such cases is ever granted. "*If thy brother repent, forgive him.*"

PART III.

MERCY

IN

ITS ADMINISTRATION.

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CHAPTER I.

UNTRIED VIRTUE.

UNTRIED virtue in creatures is purely imaginary. We know of no moral beings except such as were exposed to real and great trial. We may imagine that the angels, and also our first parents, might have been holy and happy had they never encountered any real or hazardous trial of their loyalty, their true subjection to the will of God. But had there been a way so easy and plain, surely it would have been opened before them. Must we not be admonished by what we are, in so solemn a manner, taught at the very beginning? The question so early and so solemnly set before us is the question "Wherein consists virtue?" Should we not first of all take note of the way in which virtue *began* to be shown? What was required at the very outset? What was the characteristic of the first rewardable act of the creature, and may it

be wanting in any subsequent act? Why was the great trial so soon set before our race (and how soon it was set before angels we do not know)? Dare we say it was unnecessary? That the exposing of angels and of the newly created pair, in their innocence and inexperience, to trial was in no respect inconsistent with the character of One infinite in goodness we must not for a moment call in question. Surely if the trial was unnecessary, that is, if real virtue could be exemplified and enacted and confirmed without trial, it was *not* consistent with the revealed character of God to expose to such trial. The fact that God brought angels and men face to face with such trial is proof that such trial was necessary.

Causing them to meet trial was an exemplification of God's wisdom and of his good-will. For the possibility of virtue, with its glorious rewards, is linked with the possibility of evil, with its dire and dreadful doom. Life and death, good and evil, hope and fear, set before all creatures. Goodness in a creature is goodness because it is departure from evil; a departure, too, which costs effort and which involves trial. Goodness is a victory, but victory presupposes conflict.

These were conquerors; these *are* conquerors — "more than conquerors." They wear their laurels and their crowns, not alone for what they *were* and what they *did*, but for what they *are* and for what they *do*. In the very genesis of creaturely goodness, then, there is trial. It is a triumph which presupposes trial. Light is glorious indeed. But all light is light which shineth out of darkness. Nay, I dare say the sweetest soul on earth cannot imagine light without preimagining darkness, out of which it shineth. If light be not, then darkness must be. If darkness could not be, then whatever might be could not be the light that *is*.

But if the genesis of virtue be trial, if without this there could be no beginning of virtue, let no one imagine that trial — the condition of virtue's genesis — can wholly disappear; so that virtue shall at length bear no relation whatever to that which, as we have seen, was essential to its very existence at the first.

That any creatures were so constituted that their being virtuous should cost them nothing, no effort, no self-restraint, no self-denial, but should be simply and in all things the pleasing of self, though it is a notion that is in itself supremely

absurd, and one that is without the slightest foundation in aught that man on earth observes or experiences, is yet a notion that has been marvellously prevalent and that mightily pleases multitudes of persons otherwise quite sane and sensible.

This conception of goodness or virtue is by no means a harmless delusion. Indeed there is reason to think that it was just this delusion that led to rebellion on earth, if not to that among the angels in heaven.

That this view or notion of virtue should have deceived at first, and that it should prevail in the face of all the awful warnings and solemn lessons of human experience and observation, as well as in the face of the teachings of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation; but above all, in the very light of the one perfect example of virtue set before mankind, and before all intelligent beings in the universe; example of virtue which, so far from consisting in doing his own will, consisted in the perpetual surrender of his will. "*Not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me.*" "*Even Christ pleased not himself,*" is enough to suggest, if not to prove, that it is a view or notion which

has marvellous plausibility, and is suited to deceive and to lead on to ruin. Thus:

"Make a being every way perfect, will he not do right even as water runs down its open channel towards the sea?" "Will not all his powers, faculties, emotions, desires, inclinations, propensities, aspirations,—in short, all that he is—tend always in the direction of pure and perfect virtue or goodness? Will he not always and necessarily, since he is every way perfect, move towards virtue in the one direct line, the '*nearest way*' thereto? For if he should not, or if he should even find that he were in any respect inclined, disposed, or tempted to diverge from such direct line, would it not be proof that he were not absolutely perfect, not altogether good or holy?" "The created being who finds always the direct and full gratification of all that is in him *in* doing *what* and *all* that ought to be done *by* him, is he not clearly superior to the created being who finds that it costs him strenuous endeavor, heroic self-restraint, self-denial, and self-sacrifice?" Such is the fool's philosophy of goodness. Blind, totally blind, it would seem, to the great truth which the history of our race, from the dawn of time, was designed to teach

and emphasize; viz., that virtue consists in doing *the will of God* — and this in those things which, in the nature of the case, involve *the not pleasing of self* — and in acting with supreme regard *to the good of others*.

To do what is right, and to do at the same time just what one pleases, is a manifest contradiction. If *that* were called virtue, it would be virtue only in name; it would lack the very substance of virtue; it would be neither praiseworthy nor rewardable.

When we say that "in the very nature of the case" there could be no virtue unless the will were free, and unless there were the possibility of choice; *i.e.*, unless there were a right and a wrong way open before the rational and accountable being; we must not, by this, mean to assert that this essential condition of the existence of virtue was determined by a self-existent nature of things, determined before created things existed, determined independently of the divine will, and even independently of the divine existence. "Of him are all things." What virtue is, God, by what he is — not excluding, but including, his will — determined. If we ask why could there not be virtue

in creatures and yet neither liability nor possibility of a fall, the answer is to be found nowhere short of *the nature of God himself;* the true answer *can* be found nowhere else.

To say that virtue in its nature requires freedom of will, and therefore possibility of an evil choice, is to say what does not even touch the real question. For the real question is, How was the nature of virtue determined? Now if there be a Supreme Being in whom virtue or goodness is infinite, he cannot but be the Author of all, the One "of whom are all things," and the Sole Standard of virtue. And also it is plain that if there be not such Being who is Author and Standard of virtue, then virtue is but a name.

Herbert Spencer (and indeed all the consistent agnostics of all ages) logically reaches precisely this conclusion. In his "Evolution of Morals" he naively and with ludicrous confidence proceeds to prove that virtue is only doing what by the experience of mankind has been proven or judged to be profitable, and admits that if what by the judgment of mankind are regarded as the grossest of evils — theft, robbery, and the like — had but proved in the long run profitable, mankind would have regarded these as virtuous and praiseworthy.

Both theoretically and practically this amounts to the denial of virtue altogether.

Loud are the praises of virtue by the deniers of God. Yet the virtue which they praise — even by their own confession — is but a figment of the brain, is but what is proved to be, or rather what is "judged" to be, most profitable; and surely no agnostic will pretend that man's judgment in this matter is infallible; rather is it not the burden of their lives to show how very frail and unreliable are the conclusions to which the multitude of mankind have come as regards this very question: What is right? What is virtue?

The world has had abundant evidence that any people who adopt atheistic philosophy incontinently trample under their feet the very finest theory of virtue which the human mind can devise.

The virtue to which God calls all moral beings is virtue which costs effort, self-restraint, self-denial; virtue which is a departure from evil, a triumph over evil.

Even if we could persuade ourselves that there might have been virtue which did cost nothing, no effort, no self-denial, no resistance of evil, surely even *we* can somewhat clearly see that it

had been virtue which could not for a moment stand side by side with the virtue which God bringeth forth "*seven times refined*" from the furnace of "*fiery trial.*"

The Security of The Redeemed.

What marks the boundary? What lies between us and the abyss of infinite evil? A wall of adamant? No, not even a river or a rivulet. How, then, from evil can we be forever free? Ah! "Depart from evil and do good." But know, oh man, thou canst do good *only* as thou dost depart from evil! He who in his word bids man depart from evil hath placed man in a universe where this commandment is required. Only in the universe that is could this command be obeyed. Nor think ever in thy silly heart: "The time is coming when I shall no longer need to keep myself from evil."

Abraham and Elijah, Gabriel and Michael, what separates them from the infinite abyss of evil? A Chinese wall? No. Their holy purpose, their perpetual aim, their unceasing effort to depart from evil and do good. "Confirmed?" Yes, con-

firmed in holiness; but their confirmation is not only, not apart from, but by means of their virtue. God's and their own agency alike conspire and operate — but *only within* — to keep them from evil. They are kept from evil. There is, then, evil actual and possible, wherefrom they may depart, may keep themselves free. For, to be just what they are, if evil were neither actual nor possible, would be short of true virtue — rather, just what they are, they, in that case, could not have been.

Trial and triumph, indeed. But what is triumph but trial transformed, trial gloriously and victoriously encountered. "Kept their first estate." — "Kept not their first estate" — "Kept," by one holy choice; "Kept not" by one evil choice. . . Ah! "Kept" by one choice *maintained*, *prolonged* to eternity. Victory is victory won indeed, but it *remains victory* only as it is held and maintained by that very same courage and heroism and all the noble qualities by which it was first achieved.

Even were there no gracious assurance, no promise of divine keeping, trial once triumphantly passed, the assurance of its permanent gain would

in this case increase as time passes. This alone, one might say, could not but amount to virtual or practical confirmation.* But God hath given above this, his word, his spirit. Yes, he hath admitted his redeemed into intimate, even vital relation to himself, so that all good is indeed assured, and this assurance is precious and welcome because it is in this wondrous *way* afforded. "*Because I live ye shall live also.*" "*Christ who is our life.*" "*Your life is hid with Christ in God.*" "*I in them and thou in me that they may be one in us.*" "*As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the father, even so he that eateth me shall live by me.*"

The dream of virtue or goodness or holiness which shall consist in laying down the oars, while thy bark on gentle current glides forward to limitless bliss, is a dream indeed. Hint or hope of this, neither heaven nor earth affords. The conquerors — and all good beings are such — enter

* The tendency to fixedness of character is the most solemn lesson mortal man has set before him in this world; though little heeded, and though but partially appreciated by those who give to it some serious attention. "To him that hath shall be given; from him that hath not shall be taken away," contains it all. Who can grasp the full meaning of these words?

upon their reward, secure, hold and enjoy their reward, only as they continue to be conquerors. "The same mind" is "in them" still. Evermore, even in the eternal ages, as well as in this life, "they depart from evil," and departing from evil, "do good." The evil they refused here they evermore refuse, and because of this they "do good" and "have their reward."

The painfulness of the act and effort whereby evil is in this life forsaken, is not necessarily connected with the departure from evil. Rather, virtue's crown and glory is in that this departure may be not only painless, but joyous. Of this even in this life there are not wanting hope-inspiring hints and foreshadowings. "The pleasures of sin" heroic and heaven-attracted souls have been able to abandon and flee from with alacrity, aye, with joy and ecstasy.

Trial transforms itself into triumph, rather than ceases to be. The atmosphere of trial wherein virtue was born, is that wherein virtue must live forevermore. Danger past, indeed, but existent, though past. Man was created with the view that he might triumph — not once and then *an end* of triumph, but once for all, and then *no end of tri-*

umph. Man was made that he might triumph evermore over evil; and that his preordained trial (though once a dark cloud and threatening), transformed into triumph, might remain, illumined and glorified with eternal splendor.

CHAPTER II.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

MANY persist in assuming that a perfect universe must be one wherein neither sin nor suffering entered, or could enter; that a really superior universe — one without sin or suffering — is not only conceivable, but might have been. They cannot, then, really regard as the highest and the best the One who created and who governs the actual universe, with what of light and darkness it contains. They cannot, then, really believe that this actual universe, considered as a whole, is one which conforms accurately to the ideal and thought and purpose of a perfect Creator. On the contrary they must hold that it is a second-rate universe; and one which needs to be apologized for, one whose defects or evils must be accounted for on the ground that these arise from a necessity, or a nature of things, self-existent and independent

of God; or from the caprice of creatures who, by virtue of the free agency given them, were able to thwart, defeat, mar, interfere with, or modify the divine plan and work.

No attempt should be made to explain the mystery of evil, either as to its origin, its continuance or its outcome. But we must not assume that "a necessity from without" determined anything; or that the Creator of the actual universe encountered anything which determined his choice; any law, any nature of things which rendered this or that necessary. For manifestly any law, any nature of things prevailing, he himself ordained. The easy solution — "Free agents could not but be liable to error; a universe with the possibility of sin and suffering is the only kind of universe which in the nature of the case is possible" — is worthless. It is worse; for it assumes that the Maker of the actual universe simply did the best he could, considering the restrictions under which he is assumed to have acted.

Since the perfect Creator and perfect universe not only are not, but must be despaired of, men are fain to accept and be reconciled to a second choice. Here at last they will stand. Stoutly will

they maintain against all comers, that the highest and best actually existing — or as they judge the best possible, since even the Supreme must be restricted by a necessity existing independently of him — must be one who shall insure that in the end no violator of law shall perish, but sooner or later all shall be restored to righteousness and blessedness. This assuredly is the ground taken not only by the Christian sects under various names who have held the doctrine of universalism, but it is the ground of the vast majority of all the deniers of Scripture. That is, they start with the assumption that the universe as it now is, is far short of what it might have been; but notwithstanding this all will be remedied, so that in the end it will be as it *ought* to have been and *might have been* from the first.

Others driven from even this high (?) ground by the astounding facts set before all, as also by the fearfully plain declarations of Scripture regarding the doom of the impenitent, seek to secure for themselves at least this standing-ground: The Deity, the best possible (therefore the actual), must be one who shall provide for the *very largest number being saved* from the consequences of their sin and folly.

This is a flimsy subterfuge which one would think could not possibly afford even temporary relief to a poor mortal who is exercised with needless jealousy for the honor and glory of the Creator and Ruler of the actual universe. For the question is not at all in regard to the number of those who as violators of law, and as impenitent, must suffer, but simply as to the fact that there *are* violators of law who *do* suffer. It implies that the suffering of impenitent violators of law is in itself a discredit to the universe and to the Maker of the universe; but since it cannot be abated or wholly eliminated, we must by all means reduce it to a minimum. Indeed the notion of a future probation, as also of ultimate restoration of all violators of law, is a manifest subterfuge, and one that vanishes like mist before the light of the sun. For in this case the question that is really serious is not the number of those who must suffer punishment, nor yet the extent or duration of punishment, but the punishment itself — the punishment for the shortest possible period of time. Minds that revolt at the doctrine of endless punishment ought to give due attention to the temporal punishment, which none can deny, as witnessed and experienced in this

life, and when the spectacle of the multitudinous woes which violators of law experience in this life shall have been accounted for and explained so that it no longer is unsupportable, future retribution will be no longer incredible.*

Under all these unsupported beliefs lies this fallacy, namely: That infinite goodness, which might have ensured — not to say which ought to have ensured — the standing of all, is pledged, if not to ensure universal restoration, or make final apostacy an impossibility, at least to ensure the restoration of nearly all the lapsed. . . But this is to maintain that to be merciful is not merely to provide and offer mercy and a way of deliverance, but to ensure that such offer shall be accepted. Indeed this is the one fallacy which lies at the root of all the fierce and confident dogmatism of the

* "It would not consist with infinite love to give one moment's needless uneasiness. Facts demonstrate to all who will allow God to be infinite in justice and goodness that durable sufferings may be inflicted consistently with those perfections. Complicated and long-continued miseries are very common, and death, the most dreaded of all temporal evils, cannot possibly be avoided. . . . This seems to bring matters to extremities; for if the greatest punishment which God hath threatened to inflict on sinners in this world never fails to be executed, who can prove, or even probably conjecture, that the Lord will not accomplish his most tremendous denunciations

new theologians, the opposers of evangelical doctrine in our day, as in all the former ages.

The opposers of evangelical doctrine confidently assume that God will sooner or later ensure that all moral beings shall make good and wise choice, shall cease to do evil, and learn to do well. This is to maintain that God himself, by his own act, shall cause and ensure that the choice and change, acknowledgedly essential to salvation, shall occur. This assumption is not only made in the face of all Scripture, but in the face of all that we are taught in the course of nature and providence; for what does Scripture, from beginning to end, teach, what does the history of our race teach, what do

of eternal misery?" — *Scott's Sermons. Sermon IV.*, "*God is Love.*"

Yes; it is demonstrated that to allow much suffering may be consistent with the attributes of an infinitely perfect Being.

It would be well for those who so confidently insist that the divine character is itself a pledge that there cannot be eternal suffering, if they would meet the real difficulty, which is not about eternal but about temporal suffering.

Death is (so far as this life is concerned) final. The sinner, punished during all his present life, and the punishment ended by the infliction of death (apart from any light otherwise shed on the transaction), surely gives no hint of a necessary restoration.

If it is well there should be utmost hope, may it not be well that there should be utmost fear?

conscience and consciousness perpetually proclaim, if not that the creature endowed with free will, and not God, who endowed with free will, is responsible?* In fact, this is the solemn lesson which the whole history of moral beings, good or bad, is designed to impress on us so that it shall never for a moment be forgotten.

It is true, and all the saved now and evermore confess it with never-ending wonder and joy, that it is of God's mercy and grace unto and in them, that they have been enabled to accept the mercy provided for them and offered to them. But what God doeth for, unto and in those who accept and those who reject his mercy, be it what it may, never amounts to an invasion of, much less to an extinguishment of, the freedom of the will or of the responsibility necessarily connected therewith.

The theology that holds Judas blameworthy for rejecting, must not hesitate to concede to John praiseworthiness for accepting, his Lord. The

*The denial of man's responsibility and the belief that our Maker is responsible for the ensuring of our well-being is by no means a rare thing. It is the habitual tenet of almost all those who reject the Bible and the Gospel offer. And even those who are given up to the basest passions or the most abandoned lives

orthodox are apt to take extreme ground on this matter, thinking this to be the safe side of the perilous path; forgetting that there is *no* safe side. Any theology or philosophy which, reaching back, assumes to subject to severe analysis that primal choice which is determinative of destiny, cannot blame Judas without commending John. For the determinative choice, whensoever made, is a choice which is the act of the chooser, the responsibility for which can be laid nowhere else than upon the personal will of him who makes the choice. It is a mistake to suppose that the praiseworthiness of the work of him who in any way causes or enables the will of another to choose wisely is dependent upon the passiveness (?) of him whose will is thus influenced or caused to act. The praiseworthiness of the act of him who in any way causes a wise choice to be made by another is chiefly in this, that such choice is the act *of* the willing and free agent. This is the highest commendation and glory of that grace which maketh willing, as well

are ever striving to quiet their consciences and enliven their hopes by saying, "He made us with these strong passions and he allowed us to be exposed to these temptations, and he will be 'easy with us.'" This and all like language simply means, "We are not responsible; our Maker is."

as of the act of him who, being made willing, willeth. Nor is there any ground to hesitate in regarding the right choice thus made as virtue, the wrong as sin; the right choice as praiseworthy, the wrong as blameworthy; the right choice as rewardable, the wrong as punishable; the right choice as certain to be rewarded, the wrong as certain to be punished — and in either case, by necessity, eternally so. For we are considering solely that choice which *is* determinative. And surely no one will contend that there is not, much less that there cannot be, a choice which is determinative or final.

"Not unto us, not unto us, but to Thy name be the glory," assuredly is and shall be forevermore the song of the redeemed. "We receive the just reward of our deeds," will be the confession, the wail, of the lost. But as the wail of the lost does not reduce to zero the divine sovereignty, so neither does the song of the redeemed reduce to zero the most praiseworthy, the most rewardable, the most rewarded act of the human will.

Because we cannot see how divine sovereignty and man's freedom of will and real responsibility, can be exemplified and can have full and perfect

sway and scope, can exist in their entireness, either in the one case or in the other; either in the case of those who choose and act wisely and are rewarded, or those who choose and act foolishly and sinfully and are punished, we must not hesitate to accept it as true, and as to us plainly and undeniably true that they *do* exist and *do* perfectly harmonize. What if these two truths are learned by us in their separateness? What if by a special road man comes to each? He has the most absolute assurance that he is free, and that he is accountable. He has absolute assurance that God is sovereign. Now, having these, he has the *same absolute assurance* that there is perfect harmony of these. For he cannot really believe these separate truths without believing that they *do* harmonize. To doubt of their harmonizing is to weaken in our faith as to the truth of one, if not of both the propositions. So that it is only by mere childish, inconsistent, incomplete thinking that any one can call in question the harmonizing of sovereignty of God and liberty of man, even while the comprehending of this, as to how it can be, remains a confessed mystery and one the solution of which scarcely admits a ray of hope. For self-evident is it that

the moment he questions the harmony or coexistence of these truths, he lapses from one or both of the truths at first so confidently held.

All good is indeed of God. But the goodness which is of God may be also of his own; for he worketh in them to will and to do. The cause of their willing and doing is divine grace. But causes do not ante-date effects. That which is moved, moves — moves as soon as it is moved. This is true of the movement of mind, by that agency which alone can move mind; even as it is true of the movement of a stone, by that only kind of agency by which a stone can be moved. The passiveness of a *stone* in *its* being moved, does not argue the passiveness of the *mind* in *its* being moved; for the stone moves as a stone, and the mind as a mind.

Passive in regeneration? Passive in beginning to live? It is an absurdity. It is a contradiction. It is a solecism. For, beginning to live is beginning to be active. Beginning to live is beginning to act. God causeth all life; but there is no life of any kind that is not itself, even in its beginning to be, active — active not *after*, but *in* its beginning to be, *i.e.*, to live. The words "passive in re-

generation" can mean no more than that man does not regenerate himself; that the cause and origin of regeneration, is divine power and grace. Thus understood it is worthy of all acceptation.

Any notion of sovereignty which would rob the first act of its praiseworthiness, its rewardableness, would, with equal reason, reduce all after acts to the same level. The action of grace is not such as leaves no room for the action of him who is its subject. Rather grace consists in causing and enabling its subject to act. Grace begins by causing its subjects to act. Out of, it may be, a very laudable motive — that of exalting divine grace — men, good and wise men, have believed and taught a doctrine respecting man's inability, man's natural impotence, and God's sovereign efficacious grace, which will not stand. Great and good theologians of the most orthodox school have inclined to the right hand while travelling along this narrow way, as though danger were on the left hand and none on the right; as though all that could be said in disparagement of man should redound to the honor and praise of his Creator and Redeemer; forgetting that God is honored by the clear recognition not only of that which he doeth

for his redeemed, but by that which they do who are "his workmanship," that which they do in the exercise of the power with which he has endowed them, and by means of that grace which he affords them; and this, though such exercise, while making possible a glorious destiny, also makes possible a fearful doom.

The possibility of virtue in finite beings is, in the nature of the case, conditioned on the possibility of wrong-doing. No act could be praiseworthy were there but one way of acting. For in that case there could be no act of choice; the will could not come into play at all. A universe of moral beings with freedom of will and with responsibility and yet exposed to no danger (since even a single wrong choice was rendered impossible, rendered impossible either by the constitution of the beings having free will, or by continual guardianship from without) is a purely imaginary universe, and one very unlike the actual as made known to us either by what we observe in nature and in the course of providence or what we read in revelation or what we encounter in our experience.

Very solemn is the question: What and how

much is it competent to any being to do in the way of determining the will of another? This question must not be summarily answered or summarily dismissed. It reaches down to very practical questions of daily life. There is no escape from this question. It compels an answer. The only choice is between a thoughtful and well-considered answer and a mere assumption. Many who shrink from the study of this question as one too high for them — imagining that they are thereby showing much humility — though it may be unconsciously, do confidently assume and act upon a view of this question which is not only without foundation, but which they could not but see to be so would they but give to it what it so manifestly deserves and requires, even their best powers.

Will in its own nature is influenced — is influencible *only by motive*.

Authority or commandment of the great or of the greatest hath nothing to do in influencing the will. It is not a limitation of authority or of commandment that it hath no direct power to determine the will. For authority, in its own nature, not only hath no assignable relation to, or fitness for, such influencing, but authority can *be* — can

have room for its proper exercise — only on condition that there be, and in *so far as* there be, wills which are *free* and are moved — are movable — *solely by motive*.

Power, like authority, hath no direct access to the will. Power taketh not hold of the will at all. Indeed, to imagine power or authority, or even power *and* authority — whether these be finite or infinite — to move or influence will is quite as absurd as to imagine space and duration to move material objects. It is no disparagement of space and duration that they do not stir a leaf or an atom. It is their glory that they do nothing of the kind; that they overarch, encompass and hold in their embrace, but neither perceptibly not imperceptibly, move any created object, great or small. The greatness, wisdom, glory, goodness of God ensures every will in the universe from the possibility of invasion, and thereby ensures the possibility of virtue; thereby also exalts to the utmost; thereby also imposes real responsibility, responsibility which he never lifts for an instant, either in case of the good or the bad, and which he renders it impossible that *any other* should invade or lighten, much less remove. Power and authority

deal indeed with creatures endowed with free will, yet so as to maintain uninvaded and inviolable their freedom. Neither of these touch the will on the one side or on the other.

Power to make willing, by presenting motives, and also by a wholly inexplicable influence which one mind may exert upon another, belongs indeed in greater or less degree to every moral being, to all who themselves have free will. This power is unlimited only in the case of him who is the head and source of all authority. Yet we are not to assume that he makes willing in any way unlike that in which other authorities under him make willing.

Scripture, which always sets forth the plenitude and effectiveness of divine power in making willing, very fully and plainly teaches that this is done by the word.

That the infinitude of divine power and wisdom not only in the presentation of motives, but influencing and enabling to "*will* and *do*," should always and necessarily ensure right choice and action, might seem to us reasonable. But the solemn lesson of Scripture—and of all history—is the resistibility of the utmost motive actually pre-

sented — if not the utmost motive presentable, to man. "*My spirit shall not always strive.*" "*Ye do always resist.*" Let it not be thought that in maintaining this we maintain a doctrine which at all limits the divine power. The notion that mere power, were it only intensified and increased, might influence and determine the action of the free will, is one without foundation.

That will in its own nature is moved, is movable only by motive, is a truth which must never be lost sight of. It is confirmed and illustrated by the history of moral beings, fallen and unfallen, by all that we know of God's dealings with them before or after the fall.

Leaving out of consideration this truth, exceeding darkness enshrouds all these dealings; for then the question, Why were wrong determinations of the creaturely will permitted? is one unrelieved by any consideration within the range of man's thoughts; whereas keeping this in view, whatever darkness enshrouds the question, it is assuredly clear that in the very nature of the case wrong determinations of the will could not but be possible, not merely possible but probable; since will in its own nature is moved or movable only by

motive, and since knowledge furnishes motive, and since this in creatures is necessarily limited, how could it be that such continual clear and full view should be before the minds of even the highest and best of creatures as to ensure always and necessarily wise and right determinations of the will?

I dare, then, maintain that free wills not only are and must be exposed to the possibility of a fall, but that such fall is even probable. The history of the only moral beings known to us surely does not contradict this view, but rather confirms and illustrates it.

Will, to be ensured absolutely from error under all conceivable circumstances, must be will furnished with adequate knowledge; that is, infinite knowledge. There is but one will thus furnished. The glorious and perfect determinations of the divine will, and the consequent infinite excellence and praiseworthiness of all the divine acts, must not be considered as separate or separable from the every way worthy and always infinitely clearly seen motive or end.

If to this view it be objected that creatures could not then be absolutely confirmed in righteousness,

absolutely ensured against a possible wrong determination of the will, I answer: This is just what both Scripture and all history, all observation, all God's dealings with moral beings most solemnly press upon us for our consideration — a fact most solemn, indeed, and one that it becomes us to ponder with profound attention, reverence, and awe; but instead of casting us down in despair, it should inspire us with intensest desire for *that union to the glorious Lord* wherein all safety, all hope may be found; that union, the possibility of which, it is the glory of Scripture to make known to man. Relation to God, union to Christ, our being "partakers of the divine nature," our only security. Scripture is full of this. And how perfectly does this accord with our consciousness of the need of divine support. "*Hold thou me up.*" Thus the soul crieth. And to this cry how beautifully respond the promises: "*Fear not, I am with thee.*" "*I will uphold thee.*" "*They shall never fail.*" "*Because I live, ye shall live also.*"

Not knowing all the reasons for any right act, we can be assured that there must be infinite reasons for any act or course of conduct which God commands. Right action, then, in the creature,

is the simple acceptance of God's will — a will, of course, determined by perfect knowledge of all the reasons for the action prescribed — as ours. So that holiness consists in the acceptance of God's will revealed (that is, in any manner made known to us,) as the infinitely perfect reason for our action.

Right action in the case of all beings having freedom of will must be action *for reasons*. To make willing must therefore be to *enable* to *perceive* and *appreciate* the reasons for action. To imagine a moral being made willing and enabled to perform a good act without at the same time perceiving good and sufficient reasons for such act, is to imagine a downright contradiction, a pure and manifest absurdity. It is to fall short of the conception of a truly virtuous or praiseworthy act. For any act is right, not for itself, but for the reasons which prompted it and for the ends aimed at. Proper reasons and proper ends are not mere ornaments of what is in itself good; they are essential elements of what is good.

In the present life, and under governments such as prevail in the present estate, right action, for whatever reason or whatever ends, is indeed

accepted and even commended and rewarded; but it would be inexcusable to imagine that any act can really be acceptable, commendable, and rewardable in the sight of God, which is from wrong or insufficient reasons or ends; that any act can be virtue which is not for the one great reason — God's will; the one great end — God's glory.

An act good in itself, that is, an act which would have been good had it been from right motives and right ends, is totally destitute of virtue, is neither praiseworthy nor rewardable: without these, it is the body without the soul. An act may be called good, "good in itself," but it *is* good only when from right motives and right ends. Therefore, to make willing to any good act, any act truly praiseworthy or rewardable, is to cause or enable to act from right motives and for right ends. And undeniably the perception and appreciation of the motive and the end, both logically and psycologically, precede and determine the act. Good reasons for any act, or good ends to be ensured by it, if these are perceived only *after* the act is performed, in no respect bring the slightest credit to the act or the actor. They are

too late to be taken into account at all. Therefore, power to make willing must consist in these two things: —

1. In presenting or setting before the person motive and end.

2. In enabling to apprehend and appreciate these. Therefore, conceding that there is a direct agency, power or influence put forth upon man making him willing, this must be upon those powers of the mind which in their own nature govern, control and determine all praiseworthy action of the will; for if the will were turned or influenced otherwise than through those powers, the action, so far as character is concerned, could not be attributed to the person at all. But in all those notable texts of Scripture in which the divine power and grace in determining the will are set forth, it is always as clearly taught that the will of man freely *acts* as that man is mightily influenced *by* divine power and grace. "Thy *people* shall *be willing* in the day of *thy* power." "It is God that worketh in *you* to *will* and to *do*." These and like texts not only imply, but assert the concurrent simultaneous, the full and proper action of the will of him who is divinely and mightily wrought upon or made willing.

To make willing unto any good act is not only to cause to do that which is in accordance with reason, that which is really sustained by good and sufficient reasons, but to cause to perceive and act from good reason and right end. Nor is it at all a contradiction of this view that the most praiseworthy act of men in this life are acts which are pure and mere obedience to the divine command, and this when the reasons, or rather, when all other reasons, are hidden from view. For in all such cases the *one* reason which the true servant of God has clearly and fully set before him, is a reason which not only transcends immeasurably, infinitely, any and all other reasons (even could they be clearly and fully seen), but a reason which in itself furnishes the fullest assurance that the act is one for which there are infinite reasons, and this even though we, for the present, could see few or none of them. For whatsoever God commands, is supported by infinite reasons; and against it, from no quarter can any valid reason or objection be brought. In fact, the principle of obedience to authority is, that the authority is itself the reason for action. Nothing is true and proper obedience which falls short of this.

Therefore, all fallible authority is to be obeyed, never without reference to the infallible. There is none but One Being whose authority is *of itself* the sufficient reason for our action. Therefore, we are not only not commanded to render unquestioning obedience to any, even the highest authority set over us, but we are expressly forbidden to render such obedience without constant regard to Him who is over all. Indeed this is the form of *test* to which man was at *first*, and to which he is *ever* subjected in this life. It is never enough to say this or that was commanded by any authority, even the most sacred and legitimate by divine appointment set over us. No; we must not stop short of the divine authority. But we are justified in resting here. And why? Assuredly because we can know, can not but know, that what is commanded really has behind it infinite reasons. For we must always thus judge; God, who commands us to go in this way, sees all the reasons, sees all the ends to be attained, as though they were already secured; all is present to his mind. *We* cannot rise to that position from which all can be seen. But we *can* be assured that He who seeth all is wise and good, and therefore, by

an easy, ready and unavoidable process of reasoning, we, on purely rational grounds, conclude that what is commanded is what ought to be done, since all reason supports and enforces it. To be certain that an act is wise and good, we must be assured that the *past requires it, and that the future will justify it.* Without assurance in both these respects, how dare anyone proceed? And how else than by a divine command — some clear indication of the divine will — can such assurance be reached?

The traditional enemies of faith and obedience should be met on their own ground. When they insist that man's acts to be wise and right must be reasonable, must be acts for which there are good and sufficient reasons, and these reasons plainly seen, let it be replied that Christians do not quarrel with this philosophy at all. They simply insist and confidently affirm that the divine commandment *is* the best and highest of all reasons, the fullest possible assurance that the act commanded is one for which there is good and sufficient reason. Indeed it might be safely maintained that no creature hath or can have in any other way than by a divine commandment, more than a probability

in favor of any proposed act, and that therefore no creatures are left without some intimation of the divine will, and this as the law and the test of their loyalty, the condition of their well-being. Nor can it justly be objected that in this case the reasonableness of our acts is something that is hidden from us, or is dimly or obscurely set before us. For in the divine command is gathered up all the reasons in one, somewhat as many rays of light may, by a mighty lens, be gathered into one bright and glorious luminary.

CHAPTER III.

PROVISION FOR THE ACTUAL.

Much needless perplexity had been avoided had men been content to accept the inscrutable. The predetermination of all events is that against which there has been the greatest uprising, the most senseless clamor in all the ages. If we would but reflect, we might see that with God there could be no determinations but such as to creatures must seem predeterminations.

If we admit the proper unity of the eternity, the eternal "now" of God, or that "To the eye of God all Time is but one Eternal Present," * we shall have no hesitation in accepting, in all its extent, the doctrine that God hath "foreordained whatsoever cometh to pass." For why should a Being who is infinite, to whom the end is known from the beginning, be imagined to reserve his

* Farrar's "Life of Christ," Vol. II., p. 258.

determinations. To the divine mind the future is present, so that, strictly speaking, the divine determinations cannot be called predeterminations. "He calleth the things that be not as though they were."

Rewards are in store for the obedient, and punishments for the disobedient? Assuredly. But when and how were these prepared? Who can believe that God prepares these *after* the acts of obedience or disobedience? Or who dare affirm that the infinite Ruler of the universe may, not to say must, make double preparation, as though the result were to him as yet uncertain, undetermined, or unknown? An individual or a nation or a whole race having sinned; must agencies *then* be employed and directed against the sinful man, the sinful nation, or the sinful race? Agencies disconnected from the succession of causes coming down from the remotest past? An individual, a nation, or a race is strictly obedient to all divine law; must rewards and blessings be gotten together — rewards and blessings not resulting from the unbroken series of causes coming down from the very origin of the creation of God? The righteous Judge of all will indeed punish or reward

"according to the deeds done in the body," but the punishments and the rewards come always in the very warp and woof of the unbroken web which reacheth from the very beginning. With what measure of reverence couldst thou look up to that supreme (?) being who knoweth not yet (!) whether in a given case rewards or punishments shall be required? Or knowing which of these shall certainly be needed, gravely provideth both — the one kind to be given, the other to be exhibited only?

God's arrows — when are "they made" — when are they "made ready"? God's bow — when is it "bent"? Is not every arrow of divine justice that overtakes the sinner an arrow that was prepared of old, an arrow that has been speeding on its way through all the past, sheer to its mark; a mark (to him who aimed the arrow) not recently discovered, not lately come into view; a mark seen from eternity even as clearly as in the fulness of time? He purposes to punish the offender, but must he wait to discover the offender? He purposes, promises and *provides* "great reward" for all who keep his commandments; but the *provision*, as well as the purpose and the promise,

is from the beginning. *Man* "waits and takes measures" according as events transpire; God takes measures, not after, but before events transpire.

The arrow from God's quiver, the arrow which we see only when about to "enter between the joints of the harness," if we could interpret the hieroglyphic which is upon it, we would see was marked of old for this sole end, and has been speeding on its way in all the past; nor beside it might be seen balm or blessing, as if there might be need for these instead of the sharp arrow. Even the gunner in the sea-fight aims not at the swift-sailing ship, but at the place she will have reached. The archer sends his arrow to that point at which the swift bird shall have arrived. And cannot God aim his arrows with regard to that which he foreseeth infinitely more clearly than archer or gunner? Unto God, where and what each moral being shall be at every instant, cannot but have been known from eternity,—clearly, fully, certainly known,—so that to have made any arrangements with reference to such being, on the presumption that he might have been elsewhere, or different in character, could have been but mockery.

I am aware that many will persist in holding that as man must provide for emergencies, as man must wait to see what course events will take, as man must not aim the arrow of justice till after the crime is committed, so God also must provide for emergencies, must be ready for whatever may transpire, or must make double preparation; must wait till the free will of the creature (!) has been exercised.

That notions so crude, notions which will not endure for a moment the light of reason or of Scripture, should prevail so widely is truly astonishing. The notion that God's determinations are not from eternity, and that the forces of the natural and moral world are not — as they have been from the beginning — working together to the execution of the eternal purposes of God, but that God waits and hesitates and regards with concern the conduct of his creatures; and then, seeing how their wills finally decide, and how they at length act, institutes proceedings accordingly, is a notion that is either ridiculous or blasphemous, according to the measure of intelligence in the person entertaining it.

That which more than anything else leads to

this mistake is overlooking the fact that *our responsibility is in no way affected* by the divine foreknowledge or predetermination.

Even finite sovereigns, or rulers — presidents of republics as well as kings and emperors — make real preparation beforehand for the punishment of criminals. For this purpose prisons are built. The governments know that in the century to come there will be crime and criminals to be dealt with. And undeniably before laying the foundation, those proposing to erect such buildings will carefully consider and study the entire situation, so as to be able approximately to estimate what number of culprits may be expected and should be provided for. The data for such estimate is of course very extended and very various; the nationality, the religion, the education, the temptations — not to speak of the moral or religious forces at work, or to be yet set to work. It must be evident that this data cannot be collected and used as a basis of calculation, therefore prison-builders behoove to build at a venture. And often large prisons, owing to unexpected moral and salutary movements, happily are almost untenanted. Or they build prisons that must be overcrowded or cannot possibly contain the criminals. Now what have we here?

(*a*) A government making actual preparation beforehand for dealing with criminals not yet born.

(*b*) A government exercising utmost care and taking every means in its power to ascertain as nearly as possible what and what kind and how much provision should be made; that is, a government desiring and endeavoring to know just what will be needed, with a view of taking action accordingly.

(*c*) But who is so blind as to see not that the governments in these ways plainly and frankly confess that they *would* build prisons neither larger nor smaller than will be necessary, if only they could know what would actually be needed.

(*d*) It appears, then, that so far from taking no measures with reference to the punishment of criminals till after the crimes are committed, all governments do take measures *according to the degree of their knowledge;* and what is this if not a confession that were their knowledge more extended and accurate, their measures would be correspondingly so? But where should this lead us? If governments desire and seek, in the use of all means in their power, to know what will be needed, it is unquestionable that on the same prin-

ciple, if their knowledge were perfect, their measures, appropriations for dealing with all crimes and with all criminals, would also be complete and perfect. We have only then to accept the principles upon which absolutely all government by man is administered, and carry these up in their plain and obvious application to the divine government, to arrive at the conclusion that under the divine government actual measures have been taken; actual, ample, and every way adequate provision has been made for dealing appropriately with "every one according to the deeds done in the body." And this provision is not to be considered as of a general or indefinite kind. Neither defect nor excess can be thought of as characterizing this preparation.

There are no difficulties raised by this view which do not appear on any view that can be taken of the dealings of a being infinite in all perfections. Nothing is gained by assuming that divine decisions are reserved till after the decision of the free will of the creature; for both the decision of the free will of the creature and the decision of the Divine Being, — which, according to the supposition, was reserved till after it, — be

they what they may, must have been known to the Omniscient from eternity. So that it is plain that whoso knoweth what events shall transpire, and what determinations *he* will make in view of them, *has already made such determinations.*

If it be said that this must not affect our conduct: "We must act in view of the promises and threatenings just as though the divine determinations were made all along the line of our daily lives." The truth plainly seen, may, nay, *must* often appear to be, and really be awe-inspiring and amazing — God meant that it should be. Nevertheless, truths of utmost solemnity, and even terribleness — views of the character and "goings" of Him who reigns over all — even when these amaze and terrify, astound and perplex, are yet, ever, when with reverent and devout spirit entertained, truths and views which bind us to righteousness and loyalty, and to truthful confidence. Dealing with God, the eternal now of God is brought down to us, and abides with us, moving on even as the refreshing sheltering shadow of the cloud over the marching Israel in the wilderness. "We need not pray, for all has been determined from eternity." Ah, God's eternity is ever present;

and the meeting with God, though to us it is in time, yet to God it is in the eternity. He that cometh to God at any time cometh to God not later or earlier in God's eternity, but cometh to him in that eternity which is one, and no more marked off by lines and measures and bounds than is space itself.

It would even seem that our manifest and easily recognized relation to infinite space — as infinite space is manifestly one, so that no person can intelligibly think himself at this or that place with reference to infinite space, but always in the one same necessary unchangeable relation thereto — was designed to aid us in conceiving of duration or eternity as also one, and that unto which our relation is and must be at all times the same.

Of the widest sea we sail upon we may say: "Now we are nearer to this shore; now we are in the midst of the sea; now we are nearing the farther shore." But were this sea, boundless, shoreless, such language would be not merely childishness, but madness. The duration which we regard, the time we live in, is not, as we sometimes think it to be, preceded by an eternity unto which minutes and days and years are being con-

stantly added, (?) is not followed by an eternity from which days and weeks and months are constantly being carved. No; there are not two eternities — eternity is one. There are not two infinite spaces. For they everywhere coincide and become one, even while we strive to think them two. So also the eternity in which God dwells and from which he speaks unto, and deals with us, is one eternity ever present. So long as we think otherwise, we shall have no end of difficulties in regard to God's predeterminations. With most persons who are truly devout and trustful toward God, the "now" of God's ever present eternity is accepted with childlike spirit. And this sweet simplicity of true piety is justified by the severest and most searching thought.

When we think of events occurring earlier or later in duration, we are not thinking of their relation to eternity at all. For separate them myriads of years, yet are they not at all differently related to eternity but only to events in time or in finite duration; even as two objects separated by vast distance from each other are not differently related to infinite space, so that you can affirm of one of them what you could not of the other. In

fact, any one object, in so far as its relation to space is concerned, may be regarded as in the very centre * of infinite space, from which it can never wander. Indeed we lapse from the conception of space when we entertain the thought of the possibility of the change of relation unto it.

But have we not here in omnipresent space — a pure and simple unit, manifestly infinite, its infinitude ever pressed upon us — a type of the Omnipresent Infinite Being? And is it not this which is beautifully and forcibly presented to us in the Word of Inspiration?

Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there.
If I make my bed in sheol, behold! thou art there;
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the utmost parts of the sea,
Even there shall thy hand lead me,

* If indeed the word "centre" did not amount to a solecism. Some have, as we all know, ventured to define space as "a sphere whose centre is everywhere, its circumference nowhere." While such definition is manifestly puerile, it at least indicates that those making it had some faint conception of the necessary relation of each thing to the unit infinite space.

And thy right hand shall hold me.
If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me,
And the light about me shall be night,
Even the darkness hideth not from thee,
But the night shineth as the day:
The darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

CHAPTER IV.

PROVIDENCE AND PRAYER.

NOTHING has perplexed even gifted and reverent minds more in all the ages than the question, How can it be that the universe is governed by law, that whatsoever comes to pass is not only foreknown, but foreordained, and yet provision made for prayer, and the answer of prayer? We think of prayer as having been greatly delayed, as offered up in "man's extremity," and we wonder how without violence to the order of the universe, without interference with the reign of law, it can be answered. But really the latest prayer was before God when the earliest was; rather, was present to the divine mind before time began; and in view of it (as of everything else that occurs in the universe) he started those harmoniously working forces for the ends wise, glorious, and perfect, which he set before him. Indeed, if we simply

admit that every prayer was contemplated from eternity — which is simply to admit that in the realm of the moral, as of the material universe, *means* and *end* were together embraced in one perfect purpose — there is no need for a special philosophy which shall account for prayer and the answer of prayer.

Spontaneous as to us it seems, it is not therefore either unknowable or separated from the order and chain of events fixed and determined from the beginning. It may be indeed one of the most wonderful examples and instances of the marvelously nice arrangements in the moral and material universe, nevertheless *it is not different in kind, but in degree*, from those other arrangements which elicit boundless admiration and delight. That there should be provision for all the complicated attractions "*felt*" by any of the great orbs in pursuing their appointed paths in space, never fails to excite in the mind of the astronomer devout admiration. But that marvelous arrangement by which the sons of God are enabled to pursue "their course" through all dangers and trials, and by which their prayers in every crisis of their lives are graciously answered, is an arrangement

which really reveals the glory of the Creator in a way which transcends the most marvelous provisions for the order and harmony of the material universe, even by how much the moral and the spiritual transcend the material. "*Before they call I will answer.*" Provision for the answer may well be believed to have been made beforehand; and instead of detracting from, this immeasurably enhances and commends the transaction.

Nothing can so profoundly move the devout suppliant as the assurance that God not only loves him and cares for him, but that God loved — "*yea, I have loved thee*" — and careth for him, in that he created the universe, and in that he governs it so that all things "work together for good." For thus he is admonished that the goodness of God found expression in all his works; that God, who is his friend, compels the universe to be friendly to him, "*the stones of the field*" to be "*in league*" with him, the "*stars in their courses*" to fight his battles. And indeed, why should it be thought strange that God should make the universe to do his will? Man may not always be able to govern that which he himself constructs. Foreign interferences may disappoint his best endeav-

ors. But God is Lord of the universe, and this not in that vague and general sense dreamed of by heathen philosophers, but in that perfect, accurate sense so clearly, fully declared by Christ. "*Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? Yet cannot one of them fall to the ground without your Father.*"

It is our privilege not only to look up to God himself as favorable to us, but also to look upon all the works and ways of God as the expression of his favor. How this view endears to us the whole material creation as it meets our eye from day to day. How this view enables us to regard with serene and joyful interest the wonderful works of the Creator and the whole order of events in providence as these are unfolded to us. And let it be noticed that for the support of this view nothing more is required than simple faith, accepting the plain word of Scripture in its obvious, unmistakable meaning. Unfortunately we soon turn away from the words "All things work together for good," and in the hour of trial pass over and join with Jacob, complaining, "All these things are against me."

The Omnipresence of God In Eternity.

That "with God the past and the future are as the present," or "that to the eye of the Supreme all time is one eternal present" while it is accepted in words, there is reason to fear is rarely accepted in itself, and in its plain and practical bearings. For is it not self-evident that the acceptance, in good faith, of the unity of the eternity and of the presence of God therein, simply lifts the clouds which gather around the whole question of a particular gracious providence, and the answer to the prayer of those who believe, love and serve the Lord?

And no other view — theological or philosophical — can do for us what this view does; *i.e.*, can bring us to see that in prayer we deal with a Being who is present to us not only in space, not only in the place we are in, a place not separate or separable from that wherein God dwelleth, but in duration, in the moment of it now present, or, strictly speaking, now passing; and this moment not cut off or separated either from the past or the future, but coinciding with the eternity which God

himself "inhabiteth." Indeed it is *as if* from the eternity past our petition had been addressed unto "our Father which is in heaven." For in duration absolute, that is, in eternity proper, there is no past, no future, but one eternal present. And it is in God's eternal present that all praying ones meet with him.

To us there must seem to be not only two distinct and clearly separated portions of our earthly life, but two distinct and separated eternities, the past and the future. *From* the future — of life, and of eternity to come — minutes, hours, days, and years taken; *to* the past — of life or eternity past — the same added. But this seeming, itself furnishes its own correction. For we need not tarry long in reaching the conviction that whatsoever can either suffer diminution or addition, cannot be infinite.

And in another way we get the same salutary correction. We can soon come to the most unqualified assurance that two infinites of the *same kind* cannot be. There is clearly no contradiction or inconsistency in thinking of the co-existence of infinite space and infinite duration. But two infinite spaces are not thinkable. They coincide,

they become one even though we try to think them two. But it is quite as clear that the notion of two eternities is equally absurd.

The proper conception of the unity of the eternity is the conception of the present—which we all distinctly have. From what we know of our presence in *any* place, we form our conception of God's presence in *every* place. We think of him as being present everywhere, as we are present anywhere. Exactly corresponding to this, we get our conception of God's presence in all duration by means of our presence at any point of duration. Accordingly when we would form the truest idea of the eternity wherein God dwelleth, we must conceive of it as an "eternal present," an "eternal now"; even as of the omnipresence of God in the unit space, we conceive of him as being "here," that is, where we are. "Truly God was in this place." "Ascend I heaven; lo, thou art there." But does not this lead us to a very clear and very practical and most soul-satisfying view of our nearness to God, in his eternity and in his immensity?

With gladness, while with the utmost awe, we may then accept it, that our now and God's coin-

cide; that there are not really two units, the present, the moment, and eternity; but the one unit eternity which in its entireness is the now of God, wherein we may meet with him; and that our place, our here, is not separate from that of God, but being *in* space is *of* space which is a unit, and one to which all places within it are equally related.* So that when we meet with God in the place *we are in* which seems restricted, infinitesimal, we really meet with him in his immensity.

* The unit, a point; the unit, a moment — moment true and proper, not duration, not divisible — are not these the divinely provided means by which we come to something like a just conception of the omnipresence of God in space and in eternity? for these are, and are even *to us*, manifestly and undeniably true and proper units.

But these not only enable us to come to some very clear and satisfactory view of the omnipresence of God in duration and in space, but we are led to see that in the "now" and the "here," that is, in the present *time* and in the present *place*, we may meet with God. And that the "now" of which we are always clearly conscious, as present, and the "here" of which we have like and clear knowledge, is always the appointed time and the appointed place of our meeting with him; the "*trysting-place*" of believing souls.

But clearly connected with this we may also see that the "now," though evanescent, and the "here," though infinitesimal, though indivisible, though a point, and a moment true and proper; the one having neither length, breadth or thickness, the other having no parts — do nevertheless, rather, do

How can we rightly prize the places and the moments of our earthly lives? Are these not windows which open directly into the infinitudes, immensity and eternity, wherein God dwelleth? "*Praying always.*" "*Thou God seest me.*" "*Truly God is in this place.*" Time and place. Appointed time, appointed place. And know that better time and better place could not be. "Now" *is* the accepted "time" — and "now," always implies "here." This, then, is God's time and place by express and plainly revealed appointment.

because of this — their being true units, their having no parts — bring us close to that other unit of, and in which, each of these — that is, every "now" and every "here," every time and every place, cannot but be.

For when thought is dealing with space, only two proper units are thinkable, a point and space absolute. So also in dealing with duration — the moment true and proper, and eternity.

But that which is of the utmost interest in this whole matter is, *the coincidence of these pairs of units.* When we say that a point is a unit and that space absolute is a unit; when we say that a moment is a unit and eternity a unit; and when we say that between these no other unit is thinkable; it must not be thought that we really hold the view that there can be in that which is itself a unit — immensity or eternity — the possibility of another, much less of an indefinite number of proper units. No, while *to us* the unit eternity can be known only in the unit the moment; and while *to us* the unit immensity can be known only in the unit a point, or the "here"; *to God* eternity is *all moment*, that is, *present;* and immensity *all* the point or "*here.*"

Nor will any one gain a just view of the preciousness of the time and of the place, unless he accept it that the time and place to him so restricted is related to, identifies with, that of God, which is unlimited and infinite. Thus: We pray at this late day and in the midst of affairs, in these ends of the earth, in our place and our time; yet time and place in which he is present to us, because present in his own immensity and eternity, unto which all times and all places are equally related. Since the Being we address in prayer is One who filleth immensity, whom "the heaven of heavens cannot contain," who "inhabiteth eternity"; and since whatsoever shall be was provided for from the beginning, there is no need for a special philosophy in regard to prayer; for then, clearly, the praying one, pray when and where he may, meets with God not sooner or later in his eternity; not in this or that place in his immensity, but in the "now" and the "here" of the suppliant, which are also the now and here of God himself.

And think also that God's being present with thee in *this place* is not simply because he is present in all places, but rather because he is present *in space absolute*, which is inclusive of all places;

even so, God's being present with thee at *this time* is not simply because he is present in all times, but rather because he is present in, he *inhabits eternity*, which is inclusive of all times. For the created universe we cannot for a moment imagine to be limitless, as space and as eternity wherein God himself dwelleth. Precisely as it would be manifest folly to think of being nearer to God by going from the place we are in to some other place, supposed to be differently related to infinite space, so it is really folly to think of meeting with him at a time differently related to his eternity. The place, the time, "*now*," "*here*," these touch, melt into, coincide with — so far as the finite can with the infinite — God's own now and here, whereof there can be no limit. The Everywhere Present in Space, the Everywhere Present in Eternity, who is now everywhere present both in space and in eternity, heareth thy prayer; and this, not late or early *in his eternity*, not in this or that place *in his immensity*, for in eternity there is no late or early; and in immensity there are no places, there is no "*there*," but only "*here*."

Pray now, this *is* God's time and thine. Pray

here; this is thy place by him appointed. Wonder of wonders, joy above all joys — for it is *as if* before creation he had given to thee audience; had said "what is thy request, what is thy petition, it shall be given thee." Truly in this we see at once God's marvelous grace and man's glorious hope. How in his word the folly of mankind is ever pictured and portrayed and much bewailed, in that as "birds taken in an evil net, so man *knoweth not his time*." With what vehement pleadings, with what heavenly yearnings, what infinite tenderness are we entreated to consider and prize and profit by our "day of visitation." And what soul of man, whether saved or lost, could without some touch of tenderness, recall the figure, the attitude, the tones, the tears, with which from Olivet the Friend of Sinners exclaimed "Oh, that thou hadst known in this *thy day!*" or the awful sentence following: "But *now* they are hid from thine eyes."

It is as if at the very dawn of time thou hadst been permitted to put in thy whole desire in one all-embracing prayer. It is as if before the march of time began thy prayer had been given precedence, had been the first prayer made before the mercy seat.

And know that at thy prayer — oh, wondrous grace and wondrous power — He maketh all things work together for good to thee, the universe thine, God "*for*" thee, and all that God hath made, *for* thee.

All confusion regarding this matter cometh of our mingling things quite separate. Our relation to the finite, both as regards time and place, may be endlessly varied. Our relation to the infinite — as space and duration — cannot but be, and be very manifestly, always the same. From place to place in space, true and proper, that is without regard to anything existent in space, no one can without absurdity be imagined to pass; for no change could take place as regards his relation to infinite space itself. From period to period in eternity no one can progress; for eternity considered apart from things existent, hath no periods. All times and places are swallowed up in the eternity; separate them far as imagination can separate, they meet and become one in the eternity and the immensity; their difference of relation to each other affects not in the slightest degree their common relation to the infinity of and to which they are. Mind is not extended, or that which

hath dimensions; the infinite because in the unit immensity and in every part — rather everywhere and wholly everywhere in immensity; and each finite mind because *located*, and this, not in measurable space, but in the unit "here" its place, coinciding always with the unit immensity, which includes all places.

While we are constrained to admit the omnipresence of God in the immensity, we are ever confronted with its manifest incomprehensibility; for it is not the acceptance of the notion of a being "dispersed" or *extended* in space; but rather the firm and full belief that he himself in all that he is, is ever present wheresoever we are, and wheresoever we are not; God, not by this or that organ, attribute, or power, not by what he doeth or by what he perceiveth, but God himself present ever to whatsoever is in space; God himself in all that he is *ever wholly present* to each one of us, and alike present to each. This is indeed the most wonderful, the most awakening, the most startling of all truths which it is possible the human mind can entertain; awakening and startling, but when we know him as "*our God*," and know that he is "*for us*," the most comforting, cheering, and hope-inspiring.

Not only are all things and all persons and all events, past, present and future, *ever present to God* in a fuller, clearer and nearer sense than can any person, thing or event be *at any time present to us*, or to any finite being, but they are present to God in a *manner* in which nothing, without us, can be present to us; * for we know and can know things (outside our own minds) only by *perception*; and perception not of the thing *itself*, but of the phenomena or appearances from which we form our conception of the thing itself, its essence, its nature; and, so far as now appears, we can know nothing, beyond our own mental acts or states, but by means of *organs* of perception; and that in these we may be deceived, is too fully

*In any view of the question, How God "inhabiteth eternity," *i.e.*, whether we accept the view that past, present and future are *alike* present to God; or that he simply *foresees* the future and *remembers* the past; we cannot hesitate to accept it, that any event, whether in the past or the future, is quite as fully known to him as what is present to him; or as such future event could be when it should become present to him; that is, an event which is yet many centuries in the future, it must not be thought, will in any respect come more fully or clearly before the divine mind, when it transpires; nor can we entertain the notion that any *decisions* of the divine mind regarding such event, can be reserved or delayed; since no accession of knowledge regarding anything or any event can, without blasphemy, be imagined.

and variously demonstrated to admit of a moment's doubt.

Knowledge
by
Presence Unto That Which is Known.

There is indeed in man that which we may venture to call a type or shadow of *that way* whereby God himself knoweth all things by his presence unto them.

Man's own thoughts * he knows by being present unto them. These, only these, he knows without the *intermediation* of organs of perception. Thought — in the sense including all mental acts — is present to the ego, mind, soul, or self, thinking, somewhat as all things are present unto God. Man is directly, fully, clearly conscious of his own thought at the time he thinks it; and this because he, without any mediation of any kind, is present unto it and it is present to him.

But what is the created material universe of matter and mind in its entireness but the *thought of God* † — the thought of God revealed; that is,

* "Man's own thoughts," that is, all mental acts or operations, including all that he does and all that he suffers, for in receiving impressions the mind is as truly active as in any other case.

† "How precious also are thy thoughts." In his works we do but "read the thoughts of God after him."

made cognizable unto rational beings? Now, as God's thought — the universe as it now is and as it ever shall be, including all its progress and unfoldings — was clearly, exactly, fully present to God "before the highest part of the dust of the earth was formed"; even so, his thought fully revealed — "materialized," so to speak, made cognizable to his creatures — is still present to the divine mind, ever *equally* present to the divine mind; and this, not by perception of it, either *by* organs or *without* organs, but by his presence unto whatsoever is.

Man's thoughts are evanescent; God's thoughts are enduring. "The counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and the purposes of his heart to all generations."

If, then, in all simplicity we accept it, that whatsoever hath been, is, or shall be, is always present to the divine mind in a way which is *like* that in which a thought is present to the mind of man *as* and *when* he thinketh it, we may be greatly helped to a right and very satisfying view of what Scripture so fully and variously teaches us, not only respecting the divine knowledge of all things, but especially respecting *his presence unto all*

things, persons and events in all space and in all duration; for we must not think that the thoughts of God, because revealed by his word and by his works and by his providence — revealed not for an instant but through vast ages and cycles — do therefore in any respect depart from him; they are ever *equally* present to him. "*Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.*"

Mercy in Answer to Prayer.

In all Scripture, in the recorded experience of the saved who have gone before us, and in our experience of divine mercy in the past of our lives, we are taught that it is the Lord's *way* to dispense blessings in answer to prayer. Providence constrains us to pray. Life is to all men trial. "*When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*" [1] How much of trial and what kinds of trial are required God himself alone can know. And it is his way to reveal to us his will in these matters, for the most part, day by day as we go on in life.

[1] Job. XXIII. : 10.

We have a divine revelation in Holy Scripture, any page of which we may open at will. We have a divine revelation in providence; one which God himself, with his own hand, opens to us page after page day by day. Should we not then look upon it with deep reverence, with devout attention, with earnest desire to know its meaning, and with earnest prayer that we may profit by what is *thus* revealed to us? It *is* God's will. It is a *revelation*. It is God's will concerning *us*. It is a revelation *unto us*, and for our benefit.

At the close of one of the wonderful presentations of the established order and course of providence in dealing with mankind, we read: "*Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.*"[1] He who *speaks* to man in tones of infinite tenderness in his word, *deals* with man in infinite tenderness in his providence. His providence is freighted with good, and only good, to those who love and serve him. Can this be so made clear to us that we shall habitually derive from it that measure of comfort, satisfaction and joy which it is suited to impart? The faith that infinite good-

[1] Ps. cvii. : 43.

ness directs all the movements of those "high and dreadful wheels" [1] which at times seem to threaten our destruction, is a faith which is sublime indeed. There are times when all things seem to be against us; yet in the very darkest hour, with this faith reigning in our souls, we can say "It is well." "He doeth all things well." "The whole paths of the Lord are truth and mercy." "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

Whoso would preserve this faith in its brightness and in its triumphant and benignant reign, must look sheer above the highest rim and border of the "high and dreadful wheels" — must have the eye of the soul ever open towards the Infinite — must gaze steadfastly upon the Glorious One who guides all unerringly to the end which he himself has ever in view. In this matter, the most advanced Christian philosopher must, in these days, even as the humblest of the Hebrews in the days of old, *see* and *mark* the "*hand of God*" in all that transpires in nature around him, and in all the events of providence. For it is with God that we have to do. The vast and wonderful series of intervening objects and agencies which seem to

[1] Ezekiel i. : 18.

come between us and him, do not separate us from him. *Through* all these he worketh. *By* these he worketh. *In* these he reveals himself. In these he comes *near to us.*

We are responsible for the double revelation which God makes to us: the one now completed and delivered to us in the word of Scripture; the other given to us day by day even all our lives. The fixed and completed word of revelation is given us that we may by it interpret the other revelation which God is perpetually making to us in his providence. This is the duty, this is the privilege to which we are called. More transcendent, more instructive, more inviting, more enrapturing theme could not be imagined! Is it true that the whole course of divine providence, rightly interpreted, reveals the loving kindness of the Lord? God in nature, God in providence, the same God whose infinite goodness we have learned, observed and experienced in grace? If we place before us the most tender and loving words of Scripture, and look up from these to the wonder and mystery of providence, what joy, what rapture, what ecstasy may we not feel, as we discover *in providence* the *same loving kindness* which

we find written in the word? Indeed, only thus can we rise to the region of serene, perfect peace and rest. The outlook of the man of God who has not only learned to read the Bible and rightly interpret it, but who has also learned to read and rightly interpret the order and course of divine providence, is grand and inspiring. His sky may not always be without its clouds; yet they are clouds which detract nothing from the glory or the beauty of the heaven that is over him. "All is well." "The good Lord reigns." "The earth is full of his goodness." Providence is a perpetual manifestation of the loving kindness of the Lord. Whoso interprets it otherwise, misinterprets it. This the best of God's servants are at times tempted to do.

Poor, sorrowing, heart-broken Jacob exclaims: "All these things are *against* me!" Devout, courageous David, "hunted as a partridge in the wilderness," cries out in an hour of sadness: "I shall one day *fall* by the hand of Saul!" Even the intrepid and heroic Elijah flees into the wilderness and lies down under a juniper-tree, saying: "*Let me die.*"

No, Jacob, all these things are *not* against thee;

they are *for* thee. "*Joseph is yet alive*"; he is sold into Egypt, but "*God means it for good.*"

No, David, thou shalt *not* "fall by the hand of Saul"; thou shalt *live* and *reign* and "*sing* of the mercies of the Lord forever."

No, Elijah, *thou* shalt *not die* "under the juniper-tree"; thy body shall not lie in the wilderness to be devoured by the wild beasts of the field. *Jezebel* shall *die* ingloriously, but thou shalt escape death; shalt ride in triumph to glory; shalt ascend to heaven "in a chariot of fire."

Be assured, oh, tried and tempted child of God, that in like manner all thy fears shall vanish, while deliverances, blessings, honors, joys, shall be given thee, even exceeding abundantly all that thou art able to ask or think.

Very difficult is the interpretation of providence. Faith is required in reading providence as in reading the word. What is the key to the books of God? What is that which is most essential to the right interpretation of the word or the work or the providence of God? Surely the right conception of his character. Only with the true idea and conception of the Supreme Being as most merciful, are we prepared to read the threefold volume

ever open before us. Personal experience of his grace as the hearer of prayer is necessary to a right view of his word, his work, or his providence.

Clouds and darkness are round about him — round about him in ALL the ways in which he manifests himself to his creatures; round about him in his word, in his work, in his ways — yet, having experience of his goodness, his infinite goodness, even his mercifulness, we know that HE is *the same* "Lord God, merciful and gracious," *while* the clouds and the darkness *are* round about him. If he has been merciful to us, he is merciful in himself. Oh, then, strive to get the key to the books of God. In these you may read forever with never-ending wonder and joy. For in these you will read the loving kindness of the Lord. Have right thoughts of him and you will see everywhere the marks and traces of his real character. Have right thoughts of him and you will not interpret *against* him, even the darkest portion of his word, his work, or his way. But you will "*wait*" and "*watch*" and "*observe*," and at last "UNDERSTAND" the loving kindness of the Lord.

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